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CHRIST

IN MODERN LIFE:

SERMONS PREACHED IN ST. JAMES'S CHAPEL,

YORK STREET, ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, LONDON,

BY THE

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Chaplain in Ordinary to the Queen.

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PREFACE.

THE MAIN THOUGHT which underlies this volume is outlined in the first two sermons, and is this: that the ideas which Christ made manifest on earth are capable of endless expansion, to suit the wants of men in every age; and that they do expand, developing into new forms of larger import and wider application in a direct proportion to that progress of mankind of which they are both root and sap. If we look long and earnestly enough, we shall find in them (not read into them, as some say) the explanation and solution not only of our religious, but even of our political and social problems. Nor do they contradict the ideas which direct scientific research, nor those which have been generalised from the results of that research, but are in essential analogy with both one and the other.

In speaking of their first revelation and the manner of it, of the Person and Character of Him who sent them forth to run swiftly upon earth, of the points, as in the case of prayer and immortality, in which they seem to come into collision with science, of the way they touch political and artistic questions, and finally of the

varied course of modern human life from childhood to old age, I have striven to keep my main idea before me and to support it by proof, though I have not turned aside to insist upon it in direct words. In one word I believe, and rest all I say upon the truth, as I think, that in Him was Life, and that this Life, in the thoughts and acts which flowed from it, was, and is, and always will be the Light of the race of Man.

In writing one is often deceived by half-memories—one remembers the thoughts but not whence they have been derived; and I have found since this book went to press that in two places at least I am indebted for my words to other men—to Neander's 'Life of Julian,' in a passage in Sermon IV., on the civilising influence of Christianity, and to Fichte's 'Vocation of Man,' in Sermon XIV., for a portion of the argument from our consciousness of Will and its results to the existence of a 'self-active reason and a living Will.' With much of Fichte's philosophy I disagree, but beyond, or rather within his philosophy there is teaching both on life, morality, and religion, which makes him more worth the reading of persons troubled by the great spiritual questions than any other of the German philosophers.

STOPFORD A. BROOKE.

LONDON: *January* 1872.

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THE FITNESS OF CHRISTIANITY FOR MANKIND.

'Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.'—Matt. xiii. 31, 32.

We are told, in one of the Arabian stories which charmed our childhood, of a fairy tent which a young prince brought, hidden in a walnut-shell, to his father. Placed in the council-chamber, it grew till it encanopied the king and his ministers. Taken into the court-yard, it filled the space till all the household stood beneath its shade. Brought into the midst of the great plain without the city, where all the army was encamped, it spread its mighty awning all abroad, till it gave shelter to a host. It had infinite flexibility, infinite expansiveness.

We are told in our sacred books of a religion given to man, which, at its first setting forward, was less than the least of all seeds. It was the true fairy tent for the spirits of men. It grew till it embraced a few Jews of

every class: and men thought, 'Now it will do no more; it can never suit the practical sense of the Roman, nor shelter beneath its sway the subtile intellect of the Greek. To do one is improbable, to do both is impossible.' Curious to say, it did both. It made the Roman more practical; it made the Greek intellect alive again. When Rome fell, and during her long decay, some may have said: 'This boasted religion may suit civilisation, but it can never adapt itself to barbarism.' But it expanded in new directions to embrace the transalpine nations, and took new forms to suit them with an unequalled flexibility. Soon it covered Europe with its shadow, and in a continent where types of race are oddly and vitally varied, it found acceptance with all. It has gone abroad since then, and reached out its arms to the Oriental, the African, the American tribes, and the islands of the seas. And however small may have been its success at present, there is one thing in which it differs from every other religion—it has been found capable of being assimilated by all, from the wild negro of the west coast to the educated gentleman of India. I speak of the teaching of Christ, not of unyielding Christian systems; and nothing is more remarkable in that teaching than the way in which it throws off, like a serpent, one after another, the sloughs of system, and spreads undivided in the world, and operates unspent, by its own divine vitality.

Now it is this extraordinary power of easy expansion, this power of adapting itself to the most diverse forms of thought, which is one strong proof of the eternal fitness of Christianity for mankind. This is our subject.

It has these powers, first, because of its want of system.

Christ gave ideas, but not their forms. We have one connected discourse of his, and there is not a vestige of systematic theology in it. Nay more, many of the statements are so incapable of being grasped by the intellect acting alone, and so ambiguous and paradoxical to the pure reason, that they seem to have been spoken for the despair of systematisers.

What is one to do with a sentence like this—'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God'? We cannot make a dogma out of it; we cannot get it into a system; it breaks down under logical analysis. 'What is it to be pure in heart?' asks some defining person; 'does it refer to general cleanliness from all sin, or freedom from the special sin of unchaste thought? What is it to see God? Above all, what is God? That question is insoluble, unknowable.'

We cannot call a teaching systematic which in this way leaves aside the understanding unless first instructed by feeling, which appeals first of all to certain spiritual powers in man which it declares to be the most human powers he possesses. Such phrases have no intellectual outlines; purity of heart has nothing to do with the region of the understanding; God is not an intellectual conception. But if man has distinctly spiritual emotions and desires, words like these thrill him like music.

Indeed, there is a fine analogy to Christ's words in music. It is the least definable of all the arts; it appeals to emotion, not to reason. Neither you nor I can

say of that air of Mozart's that it means this or that. It means one thing to me, another thing to you. It leaves, however, an indefinite but similar impression upon us both—a sense of exquisite melody which soothes life, a love of a life in harmony with the impression made, and an affection for the man who gave us so delicate an emotion. So is it with the words of Christ. The understanding cannot define them; the spirit receives them, and each man receives them in accordance with the state of his spirit. To one these words, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,' are solemn with warning, to another they are soothing with comfort; to one they mean battle, to another peace; to one they sound like music on the waters, to another like the trump of doom.

Could you define the meaning of Mozart's air, so that it should be the same to all, how much had been lost! Could you do the same by Christ's words, what a misfortune! To limit them to one meaning would be to destroy their life.

Again, take the paradoxical sayings. 'If a man smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other.' Submit that to the criticism of the understanding, without permitting spiritual feeling to play upon it, and it becomes absurd. Define it accurately, and there is either too much or too little left of it. Tell the man who has a tendency to fear that he is to take it literally, and he becomes a coward on principle; tell the same to another who has military traditions of honour, and he says that Christ's teaching is not fit for practical life. But do not attempt to define it, let the spirit of each

man explain it to himself, and the truth which is in it will work its way.

There is no doubt, I think, that Christ would have refused to explain it. All He would have said, He did say: 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.'

It seems as if Christ distinctly chose indefiniteness in certain parts of his teaching, in order to shut out the possibility of any rigid system of Christian thought.

Of course there are positive and definite portions of his teaching. 'Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you.' 'Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.' 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.' 'Love one another, even as I have loved you.' These were definite statements, which appealed to the spirit of man, but even in their case Christ never wove them into a fixed system of theology, nor hardened them into an unchanging mode of practice.

How was He to systematise aspiration to perfection, or define the love of man to man, or explain in limited words the passionate desire to be redeemed from the moral degradation of sin? Was He to reply to men who asked Him to say what He meant by 'our' in 'Our Father'?

No; the statements were positive, but they had to do with things not knowable by the understanding, not definable by the intellect. Therefore, Christ's religion can never be made into a system. It will form the basis and the life of system after system—it will never be itself a system. And, because of this, it has the power of expanding with the religious growth of the world,

and of adapting itself to the religious standpoints of various nations.

Men must form systems, it belongs to our nature to do so. Fifty years did not pass after the death of Christ before Christianity was cast into a mould, and intellectual propositions formed around it. But even then S. Paul cast it into one mould, and S. John into one quite different. It was flexible to both, and retained in both these men its root ideas and its spiritual influence, so that its spirit through S. John had power upon the Oriental and through S. Paul upon the Western world.

A century afterwards the modes of representing Christianity changed, and continued to change from generation to generation in that intellectual time, till there were as many systems of Christianity as there were nations in the Church. Its flexibility was proved to be almost infinite. And it has continued so up to the present time. It is systematised in three or four forms in England at this moment, and they may all have perished in a century; but the spirit of Christ's teaching will have remained, expanding to suit the new thoughts of men, and the progress of the whole nation. Therefore, it is contained in the idea of Christianity that its outward form should be not only subject to continual change, but should even be different at one and the same time in different nations.

Hence, the fighting and opposition of sect to sect which has been objected to Christianity is one of those things which flow from its very nature. If its founder left it unsystematised, it was sure to be systematised in

different ways, and these differences would produce contention. Contention is an evil, but it is a less evil than the spiritual stagnation which would have followed upon a hard and fast system.

Moreover, if Christianity was to expand, it was necessary that its truths should be the subjects of controversy, that different and opposing systems might place now one of its ideas, now another, in vivid light; so that, by the slow exhaustion of false views, it might come forth clear at last, unrobing itself as a mountain from the mists of the dawn.

Make any religion into a system, define its outlines clearly, and, before long, there will be no movement of thought about it, no enthusiasm of feeling, no vital interest felt in its ideas. It suits the time at which it is put forward, but when that time has past, it has nothing to say to men. But let system be foreign to it—let its original ideas be capable of taking various religious forms—and it will have the power of expanding for ever, of becoming systematic without ever binding itself to system; changing its form not only in every time but in every country, and growing in a direct ratio to the growth of the world.

Therefore we say, the original want of system in Christ's teaching ensures its power of expansion, and that fits it for the use of the Race, now and hereafter.

But if this were all, it would prove nothing. There must be a quality in a religion destined to be of eternal fitness for men which directly appeals to all men, or else its want of system will only minister to its ruin. And if that quality exist, it must be one which we

cannot conceive as ever failing to interest men, and therefore as expanding with the progress of Man.

We find this in the identification of Christianity with the life of a perfect Man.

What is Christianity? Christianity is Christ—the whole of Human Nature made at one with God. Is it possible to leave that behind as the race advances? On the contrary, the very idea supposes that the religion which has it at its root has always an ideal to present to men, and therefore always an interest for men. As long as men are men, can they ever have a higher moral conception of God than that given to them through the character of a perfect Man, and can we conceive in centuries to come men ever getting beyond that idea as long as they are in the human state? The conception of what the ideal Man is, will change, as men grow more or less perfect, or as mankind is seen more or less as a vast organism; but as long as there is a trace of imperfection in us, this idea—that perfect humanity, that is, perfect fatherhood, perfect love, perfect justice—all our imperfect goodnesses—realised in perfection, and impersonated in One Being, is *God to us*, can never fail to create religion and kindle worship. It is the last absurdity, looking at the root ideas of Christianity, to say that it is ceasing to be a religion for the race.

The 'religion of Humanity' and the 'worship of Humanity' considered as a great and living whole, is the latest phase into which religion apart from Christianity has been thrown. I am unable to see how it differs, so far as it asserts a principle, from the great Christian idea.

Everything it says about Humanity and our duties to Humanity seems to me to be implicitly contained in Christ's teaching, and to be no more than an expansion of the original Christian idea of a divine Man in whom all the race is contained, and who is, ideally, the race. But I am far from wishing this new religious idea to be set aside as unworthy of consideration, nor do I join in the cry which has been raised against it. On the contrary, I wish it to be carefully studied, that we may get all the good out of it we can, and add many of its ideas to our present form of Christianity. Most of its positive teaching is Christian in thought and feeling, though it denies or ignores other Christian ideas which seem necessary for a human religion. It would be untrue in a Christian teacher to despise or abuse a religion which puts self-sacrifice forward as the foundation of practical duty not only among men, but among societies and nations. It would be equally untrue if I did not say that the refusal to consider the existence of a personal God, and the immortality of man, will, in the end, make that religion die of starvation.

But with regard to the special point in question—the worship of a great Being, called Humanity—there is this difference, and it is a radical one, between Christianity and the religion of Positivism, that the Humanity the latter worships is indefinite to the religious emotions, while its system is definite to the understanding. It is in this the exact reverse of Christianity, which has no system capable of being defined by the understanding, and possesses a Human Person distinctly defined for the

emotions. It is plain that, if what I have said be worth anything, the definite system in this religion will be an element of death in it and forbid its contemporaneous growth with the race. It is no matter of doubt to me, that the worship of a Humanity—which it needs an active intellectual effort to conceive, and a large knowledge of history to conceive adequately, or which secludes one sex as a special representative of its ideal, —can never stir religious emotion nor awake action based on love to it, in the mass of mankind, however much it may do so in particular persons. The general mass of men require that this ideal Man be concentrated for them into one person with whom they can have distinct personal relations, whom they can personally love for his love, and reverence for his perfection. It is not easy, knowing mankind as we do —seeing its meanness, cruelty, and weakness, as well as all its nobility—to represent it to ourselves as an object of worship, or to care particularly whether its blessing rests on us or not. Than this, it is certainly more easy to conceive as an object of worship, God, revealed in will and character by a perfect Man; and more simple to think of one Man embodying all the Race than of the whole Race as one Man. It is a more satisfying thought, to give our love to human nature as seen in Christ, without evil, full of perfect love and sympathy, both male and female in thought and feeling, than to Mankind as seen in history. It is more delightful to love men as seen in Him, for the glorious ideal they will attain to, than to love them as they are, and without a sure hope of their eternal progress; and

that the blessing of Christ's perfect Manhood and Womanhood should rest upon us, that his love, pity, strength, support and peace, should belong to us and accompany us; that He should attend us as a personal friend and interest Himself in our lives, till they reach the perfection of his life; and that He should be doing the same for all our brothers as for us;—does seem more fitted to kindle worship and stir emotion than the thought that we are parts of a vast organism which continues to live, like the body, by the ceaseless and eternal death of its parts.

It may be possible to feel a pleasure in sacrificing oneself for the good of this great Being which lives by consuming its own children, and to enjoy the thought of immortality in its continued progress without ever personally realising that immortality. But after all, this overshadowing and abstract 'Humanity,' which crushes us while it moves on, is not attractive, and is more likely in the end to create despair and anger than to give life to hope and love.

But the ideal Man in Christ is very different. It demands the same self-sacrifice, but it does not annihilate men. And in itself it is intensely interesting to men because it is so perfectly human. Whether men are Christians or not, that exquisite life of Christ will always attract them; so true to childhood, youth, and manhood; so simple, yet so complex; so womanly, yet so manly; in love, in honour and in truth, in noble endurance, in resolute will and purity, so ideal, yet so real to that which we feel we ought to be, or may be, that there is no possible age of the world in

the far-off future, which will not, as long as men are human, love that with the love which is worship.

So the ideal manhood which is at the root of Christianity ensures to it a power of expanding with the growth of the race; and this power is one proof at least of the eternal fitness of Christ's teaching for mankind.

The third quality in it which ensures its expansiveness is that it has directly to do with the subjects which have always stirred the greatest curiosity, awakened the profoundest thought, and produced the highest poetry in man. And these are the subjects which are insoluble by logical analysis, unknowable by the understanding:—What is God, and His relation to us? Whence have we come? whither are we going? What is evil, and why is it here? What is truth, and is there any positive truth at all? Do we die or live for ever?

It is the fashion among some to say, 'Do not trouble yourself about the insoluble;' and there are those who succeed, perhaps, in doing so. Well, I think them wrong, as they think me wrong. No one feels more intensely than I do the pain of not having things clear—the vital torment of a thirst ever renewed, and not as yet fully satisfied; but I had rather keep the pain and the thirst than annihilate, as it seems to me, a portion of my human nature. I must trouble myself about these things, and so must others, and the trouble has its source in an integral part of our human nature. We must tear away that part before we can get rid of these subjects. To deny that this part of our nature exists is absurd, to affirm that it has been produced by

education in men, not having originally been in their nature, is to beg the question. What we have to do with is what lies before us, and if I were asked what is the most universal characteristic of man, that which most clearly distinguishes him from the lower animals, I should answer, that it was the passion for solving what is called the insoluble, the desire of knowing what is said to be unknowable.

I meet that longing everywhere. There is no history which is not full of it. There is no savage nation which has learnt the first rudiments of thought, in which you do not find it. There is no poetry which does not bear the traces of it—nay, whose noblest passages are not inspired by it. There is scarcely a single philosophy which does not work at it, or at least acknowledge it by endeavouring to lay it aside. One cannot talk for an hour to a friend without touching it at some point, nor take up a newspaper without seeing its influence; and if Christ had started a religion for mankind with the dictum, Lay aside thinking about these questions, his religion would seem to be unfit for men; it would have shut out the whole of the most curious part of our being. But He did the exact contrary, He recognised these questions as the first and the most important. He came, He said, for the express purpose of enabling us to solve them sufficiently. He said that truth was to be found, that God could be known, that immortality was a reality, that evil was to be overthrown, that we came from God and went to God.

But to solve these questions and to know God is not

done at once. It is the work of a lifetime. Christ said that there were answers to be found; He did not reveal the answers at once. He did not wish to take away from men the discipline of personal effort, nor to free them from the pain, the victory over which would give them spiritual strength, the endurance of which would make them men. He put them in the way of solving these questions for themselves. By asking and seeking, by prayer and humility, they were to solve the apparently insoluble. By doing his will, by living his life of holiness, self-sacrifice, and devotion to truth, they were at last to know the truth.

Therefore, because these problems which are called insoluble were left by Christ as personal questions which every man born into the world must solve for himself, human effort after God can never suffer the stagnation which complete knowledge would produce in imperfect man. Religious emotions, the play of feeling and intellect around spiritual things, desire after higher good, prayer, active work towards a more perfect love and towards the winning of truth, are all kept up in us by the sense of imperfect knowledge, imperfect spiritual being, and, in addition, by the hope which grows stronger through the experience of growth, that we shall know even as we are known, and become perfect even as our God.

Remove from religion these difficult questions, and the hope and the passion of discovering their answers, and I believe that all religious emotions will die, and all religion of any kind finally perish in contact with the world.

It is because Christianity as taught by Christ acknowledges these questions as necessarily human; it is because it leaves their solution to personal effort, and so secures an undying source of religious effort and emotion; it is because it promises that those who follow the method of Christ, and live his life, shall solve them; that Christianity belongs to men, is calculated to expand, to suit men in every age. If so, there is another reason which may be alleged for its eternal fitness for the race.

Lastly, if what Christianity says be true, that we shall all enter into a life everlasting, these three qualities in Christ's religion of which I have spoken are not without their meaning or their value to us there.

That our religion should be without a system, will enable us, in a new life and under new conditions, to reorganise it without difficulty, to fit it into the new circumstances of our being, to use it in novel ways.

That our religion is a human religion, that it appeals directly to human nature, that it is nothing apart from mankind, that it is woven up with all the desires and hopes and sorrows of men, that it bids us concentrate all the race into One Person, and love all men in Him, that it throws all our effort and enthusiasm on the progress of mankind, these do not belong to this world alone. If we live again, we shall live in a higher way, in the race; for we shall live in Christ, not an isolated life, but a life in all mankind. We shall be more united with our fellow-men, more ready to give ourselves away to them, more interested in the progress of mankind, more able to help. Never, as long as Christ

is, can we forget, or cease our communion with, the whole world of men.

And finally, that even after attaining much, enough at least to set us in all the peace which is good for us, there should remain, as I think there will remain, in the eternal life, certain questions which we shall have to solve, certain things which man cannot wholly know, it will not be an evil but a good thing for us. For that there should always be things above us and unknown, ensures our eternal aspiration, ensures to us the passionate delight of ceaseless progress.

THE FITNESS OF CHRISTIANITY FOR MANKIND.

'Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.'—Matt. xiii. 31, 32.

THOSE who love variety of colour and variety of form can scarcely reap a deeper pleasure than is his who walks slowly through the lower part of one of the Italian valleys of the Alps when spring is at its height. The meadows are full of flowers, at once so brilliant, soft, and manifold of hue, that the grass seems sown with dust of rainbows. The grey boulders, which lie like castles on the sloping lawns, are stained scarlet and gold and bronze with many lichens. Chestnut and walnut spread their rich leaves below; above, the oak clusters in the hollow places; higher still, the pines climb the heights in dark battalions. Colour, form, development, are all different; each flower, leaf, and tree each variety of grass or lichen, has its own peculiar beauty, its own individuality.

It seems impossible to include them all under one term, to say that they are all substantially one thing. Yet they are all transmuted sunshine. Every fibre,

every cell, every atomic arrangement which enables each of them to give us the sensation of red, or violet, or what colour lies between these, has been built up through means of the force or the forces of the sunshine. Nevertheless, this one original element has been modified by the tendency—I use a word which but expresses our ignorance—of each seed to assume a specialised form at a certain stage in its growth; to be modified by what one would call in mankind its character. So that we have two things: one simple source of vegetable life, infinite forms and modifications of form through which that force is conditioned.

It is a happy analogy by which to arrive at the idea of the one spirit of Christ's life, received and modified into a thousand forms by different characters of men, and different types of nations. Christianity is like the sunshine—not a given form, nor imposing a uniform system of growth—it is a force of spiritual heat and light, which expands, developes, and irradiates; a spiritual chemical force which destroys dead things, and quickens half-living things in the character. It is assimilated, but according to the original arrangement of the spiritual atoms of each character, so that it does not destroy, but enhances individuality; does not injure, but intensifies variety.

There has scarcely ever lived a single Christian man whose Christianity has been identical in form with that of another, though the species may have been the same. There is certainly no Christian nation which has produced a type of Christianity uniform with that of another. Look at the Apostolic Church, read the

epistles which remain to us. The letters of S. James, of S. Peter, of S. Paul, of S. John, differ as the oak differs from the chestnut, as the fir differs from the ash-tree. These represent in various forms what the sunshine has done for them; the epistles represent, in various forms of Christian thought, what the spirit of Christ had wrought in their authors.

I venture to say that there never has existed a set of religious books which so manifestly despised outward consistency, and so boldly fell back upon an inner unity of spirit; which, though they systematised to a certain extent, showed more plainly, taken together, that there was no system in the source from whence they drew their inspiration; which dared more audaciously to vary their modes of expressing spiritual truths, relying on, and because of, their appeal to the primary instincts of mankind.

This was one of the elements which we saw last Sunday lay at the root of the success of Christianity. It left individual and national development free, and it appealed to a common humanity. And, having no system, it promoted liberty of growth in Mankind, and when that growth had passed a certain stage, and the character of the time changed, it changed its form in turn to suit the new ideas of men. But beneath all these varied representations there will be always a few clear principles, and a spirit which will remain the same. Whether Christianity exist as Calvinist or Ritualist, Roman Catholic or Lutheran, Wesleyan or Unitarian, all these forms will have taken their life and built up their being from the sunlight of Christ.

It will be easily seen from this, how much I despise the struggle for uniformity, and how much I dread it as directly anti-Christian. Unity of spirit we should endeavour to seek for, and keep in the bond of peace; but uniformity! Imagine a world in which all the trees were pines.

The effort to establish uniformity is not only the note of an uncultivated spirit—it is especially the mark of one who has not studied the teaching of Christ, nor the teaching of the Apostles. And Christianity has been especially unfortunate in the way in which for many ages its followers, foolishly dismayed by the cry of inconsistency, have made it almost a point to struggle against Christ's altogether divine conception of a spiritual universe of worshippers at one in the midst of a boundless variety. Yet, such is the vitality of Christianity, that it has resisted the very efforts of its own children to nullify its qualities, and remains as before, a spirit of light and a spirit of life, capable of endless expansion, ready to alter its form in order to co-operate with every human movement, and working out in every human soul who receives it some subtile phase of its beauty, some delicate shade of its tenderness, some new manifestation of its graces.

We have spoken so far of the religion of Christ in contact with human character; let us look at it in contact with some great human interests.

Take politics. Other religions have laid down political systems, and bound themselves to ideas of caste, to imperialism, or to socialism. The latest religion has woven into its body a most cumbrous arrangement

of mankind and the nations of mankind. Consequently, these religions being tied to the transient, perished or will perish with the political systems to which they are bound.

Christianity never made this mistake. It refused to be mixed up with any political system, or to bind those who followed it down to any form of political union, as it had refused to bind them down to any particular form of religious union. Leaving itself perfectly free, it could therefore enter as a spirit of good into any form of government. And it did enter into all forms—patriarchal, military, feudal, monarchical, imperial, democratic—as a spirit which modified the evils of each, and developed their good. It is objected to Christianity that it does not touch on great political questions, such as the limits of obedience to a ruler, or the duties of the State to the citizens, and therefore that it is not a religion for men; but it does not touch directly on these questions because its object was to penetrate them all as an insensible influence. Had it declared itself imperialist or democratic, it would have been excluded from the one or from the other. But, entering into the hearts of men as a spirit of love, of aspiration after perfection, of justice and forgiveness, it crept from man to man, till in every nation there existed a body of men who had absorbed the spirit of Christ, who slowly brought about political regeneration through spiritual regeneration.

But because it has prevailed in countries where feudal systems and the tyrannies of caste have ruled, it has been accused of having been on the side of

oppressors of the race. The objection is plausible, but it is unfair. Some distinction is surely to be made between a Church made into a political organ and Christianity itself. When the Church, as in France before the Revolution, became a mere adjunct to the throne and threw in its lot with tyrants, it forswore its Christianity. When it established itself at Rome as a tyranny over men's souls, it turned upon its Founder and re-crucified Him. Moreover, if Christianity has been accused as the handmaid of oppression, it is at least just to look on the other side and see if it has not been the inspirer of the noblest revolutions. All its fundamental ideas—the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of all men in Christ, the equality of all men before God, the individual responsibility of every human soul, the surrender of all things for others, the one necessity of salvation for all alike, emperor and peasant—are spiritual ideas which bear an easy translation into political ideas, and which, gathering strength, have proved the ruin of many tyrannies. If Christianity has any close relation with a distinct political idea, it is with the idea of a high democracy; and if, as some say, the world is irresistibly tending to democracy, there is nothing in Christianity to prevent its falling in with this political tendency. I see no limit to its expansion, should that take place; on the contrary, I think that it will take in democracy a further and a more brilliant, a freer and more devotional development than ever it has yet done. The atmosphere will be more congenial to it.

Again, take art. Greek religion lent itself to sculpture,

but after a time its ideas were exhausted. It afforded no universal range of subjects. Some way or another, human as it was, it was not human enough to enable it to last. It was of Greece, it was not of mankind.

The religion of Mohammed shut out all painting and sculpture of living forms from its sacred architecture. But the Romanesque and Gothic builders, with a strange instinct that in Christianity there was nothing irreligious, and that every act of human life, if done naturally, or for just ends, even if it were such an act as war, was a religious act, and that all the world, animate and inanimate, was holy to the Lord in Christ, filled porch and arcade and string-course with sculpture of all things in earth and heaven, symbolised the revolving year, made parables of beauty and of terror, and threw into breathing stone the hopes, the passions, the fears, and the faith of Christian men.

This was but one field of the immense space which Christianity opened to religious art. No limitations were placed upon it by the religion; it was left to each nation, according to its genius, to develope it in its own way.

It was the same with poetry as with architecture; it lost nothing by the addition of the Christian element; it gained, on the contrary, a great subject. And that subject, in its infinite humanity, in the way it has of making those who grasp it largely interested in all things, in the majesty which belongs to it, does not prevent men from rising into the grand style—that style which makes a man feel himself divine as he reads. On the contrary, of the three poets who since

Christ have possessed this style in perfection, two employed all their power on subjects which belonged to Christian thought. The majesty of the subject reacted on their power of expression. They proved at least that Christianity does not exclude, but is expansive enough to include, the art of poetry. Moreover, a religion which appeals to human feeling, which is nothing apart from Man, whose strongest impulse is the 'enthusiasm of humanity,' can never be apart from an art like that of poetry which withers, corrupts, and dies when it is severed from the interests of men. One may even go further. Christianity has to do with the insoluble, with visions which love alone can realise, with questions to which the understanding gives no reply, with feelings which cannot be defined, only approached, in words. It is the very realm in which half of the poetry of the world has been written.

There is nothing then to prevent Christianity existing in harmonious relation with all true poetry from age to age of the world. In itself, it gives a grand subject to poetry, and both it and poetry have similar elements; their common appeal to, and their death apart from, human interests and feelings; their common life in a region above the understanding.

I need not dwell on the arts of music and painting; let us pass on to science. Supposing Christianity had committed itself to any scientific statements or to any scientific method, it could never have been fitted to expand with the expansion of knowledge, to be a religion for a race which is continually advancing in scientific knowledge. If it had bound itself up with the knowledge

of its time, it would naturally be subject now to repeated and ruinous blows. If it had anticipated the final discoveries of science and revealed them, nobody would have believed it then, and nobody would probably believe it now. Christianity committed itself to nothing. 'Yours is not my province,' it said to science. 'Do your best in your own sphere with a single eye to truth. I will do my best in mine. Let us not throw barriers in each other's way. The less we obstruct each other, the more chance there is of our finding in the end union in the main ideas which regulate both our worlds in the mind of God.'

Foolish men have mixed it up with science and endeavoured to bind each down upon the bed of the other, to make science Christian and Christianity scientific, but the result has always been a just rebellion on both sides. The worst evil has been the unhallowed and forced alliance of the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the Bible, or of the infallibility of the Church to Christianity. The moment science was truly born, war to the death arose against a form of Christianity which violated the original neutrality of Christianity towards the pure intellect and its pursuit of its own truths. But get rid of this alliance, and how is Christianity in opposition to science? what is to prevent its being a religion fit for man in that future when the youngest child will know more than the philosopher of to-day? It is no more in actual opposition to science than poetry is.

> The river glideth at his own sweet will;

I suppose no scientific man would run a tilt at that.

Its thought, its feeling, the impression it is intended to convey, are all out of the sphere of science. Nevertheless, the natural philosopher recognises that it appeals to his imagination. He receives pleasure from it; he accepts it as true in its own sphere.

But if he were told that the writer claimed infallibility for his expression, said that it expressed not only a certain touch of human feeling about the river, but also the very physical truth about the movement of the river, he would naturally be indignant. 'You have left your own ground,' he would say to the poet, 'where you were supreme, and you have come into mine, where, by the very hypothesis of your art, you are a stranger. You claim my obedience, here, in my own kingdom, the absolute surrender of my reason in a realm where reason is the rightful lord. You may be a poet, but you are denying the first principles of your art.'

Precisely the same might be said to those who are ill-informed enough to connect the spirit and life of Christianity with efforts to suppress physical science or historical criticism as tending to infidelity, or as weakening Christian truth. It might be said to them by a wise scholar: 'You may be Christians, but you are doing all the harm you can to Christianity. You are endeavouring to bind an elastic and expanding spirit into a rigid mould in which it will be suffocated. You are fettering your living truth to physical and historical theories which have been proved to be false and dead, and your Christianity will suffer as the living man suffered when the cruel king bound him to the corpse. Your special form of Christianity will

grow, corrupt, and die, for it attacks truth.' But if some Christian people have gone out of their sphere, there are not wanting philosophers to do the same. 'I know nothing of God and immortality,' says science, and with an air as if that settled the question. 'I should think you did not,' Christianity would gravely answer; 'no one ever imagined that you could, but I do; I do know a great deal about those wonderful realities, and I have given my knowledge of them to millions of the human race who have received it, proved it through toil and pain, and found it powerful to give life in the hour of death.' 'Proved it,' answers science, 'not in my way, the only way worth having, the way which makes a thing clear to the understanding.' But there are hundreds of things which are not and cannot be submitted to such a proof. We cannot subject the action of any of the passions to the explanations of the understanding. By reasoning alone, we cannot say what an envious, jealous, self-sacrificing, or joyful man may do next, nor explain his previous actions. One might far more easily predict the actions of a madman.

We cannot give any reason for love at first sight, or, what is less rare but as real, friendship at first sight. We cannot divide into compartments the heart and soul of any one person in the world, saying, This is the boundary of that feeling; so far this quality will carry the man in life. For the understanding is but a secondary power in man. It can multiply distinctions. It cannot see the springs of life where the things are born about which it makes distinctions.

> Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
> Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain-tops.

What tells us that is poetry? The voice of the understanding? 'Night's candles are burnt out,' it says —'it is a ridiculous statement of the fact that the stars have ceased to shine. Day never stands tiptoe on the misty mountain-tops. Is that poetry? It is nonsense.' But the understanding rarely acts alone in this way; a higher power in man proves to him, he cannot tell how, that the lines are magnificent poetry—nay, that the poetry is in the very passages which the understanding despises.

Let each keep to their own spheres and do their work therein. Christianity has no weapons in her original armoury which can be wielded against science, and science cannot attack spiritual truths with purely intellectual weapons. No one asks for a spiritual proof that the earth goes round the sun; it is equally absurd to ask for a purely intellectual proof of the existence of an all-loving Father. And it would be wiser if science kept her hands off Christianity. Mankind will bear a great deal, but it will not long bear the denial of a God of love, the attempt to thieve away the hope of being perfect and our divine faith in immortality. These things are more precious than all physical discoveries. The efforts made to rob us of them, when they are made, and they are but rarely made, are not to be patiently endured. They are far less tolerable than the ill-advised attempts of Christian men to dominate over science. These latter efforts are absurd, but the former are degrading to human nature.

It really does not make much matter to the race in general, whether the whole science of geology were

proved to-morrow to have been proceeding on a wrong basis, or whether the present theory of force be true or not; but it would make the most serious matter to mankind, if they knew for certain to-morrow that there was no God of justice and love, or that immortality was a fond invention. The amount of suppressed and latent belief in these truths, which we should then discover in men who now deny them, would be perhaps the strangest thing we should observe; but it hath not entered into the heart of man to imagine the awfulness of the revolution which, following on this denial, would penetrate into every corner of human nature and human life.

Both science and Christianity have vital and precious truths of their own to give to men, and they can develope together without interfering with each other. Should science increase its present knowledge tenfold, there is nothing it can discover which will enable it to close up that region in man where the spirit communes in prayer and praise with its Father, where the longing for rest is content in the peace of forgiveness, where the desire of being perfect in unselfishness is satisfied by union with the activity of the unselfish God, where sorrow feels its burden lightened by divine sympathy, where strength is given to overcome evil—where, as decay and death grow upon the outward frame, the inner spirit begins to put forth its wings and to realise more nearly the eternal summer of His presence, in whom there is fulness of life in fulness of love. No; as Christianity can expand to fit into the progress of politics, and to adapt itself to the

demands of art, so it can also throw away, without losing one feature of its original form, rather by returning to its purer type, all the elements opposed to the advance of science which men have added to its first simplicity.

It will be pleasant, if what I have said be true, for all of us to meet five hundred years hence, and, interchanging our tidings of the earth, to find that the thoughts and hopes of this sermon, in which many of you must sympathise, have not been proved untrue.

THE HIGHER JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY.

'Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.'—Matt. v. 17.

'And the common people heard him gladly.'—Mark xii. 37.

One of the most interesting positions in which a Christian teacher can find himself is when, under the pressure of new discoveries in science or in history, he is forced to change his front and take up new ground for either attack or defence of his faith. It has often happened that after the army of Christianity has defended for many years its cause from a particular place of vantage, that place becomes untenable. It is the business then of the army to change that position, and it almost invariably changes it under a cry from the enemy that the Christian cause is overthrown. The weaker members of the host itself, who have grown so fond of the position as to identify the cause with the ground they held, add to the noise of the enemy their own feeble wail that Christianity itself is in danger of destruction. Both the cry and the wail are out of place. That the Christian army should alter its front and take up new ground is a known necessity of the contest. It has done so often in the course of history, and we must expect that it will have to do so again. And the

fact is that in all these changes it has never lost ground which it has not more than regained. It has left behind several positions which were useful at their time, and in these some stragglers are still fond of loitering; it is even true that some large portions of the army have gone back to hold abandoned positions in order to keep up their communications with the past, but the vanguard is still in advance, ready to meet any difficulties introduced into the contest by the discoveries of science or the advance of criticism. It does not deny the truth of proved discoveries, nor the value of criticism, it only opposes the inferences drawn from them by persons afflicted with fanatic infidelity. Their attack is made upon Christianity as seen entrenched in the old position. Our answer is that we have abandoned that position, that it was only temporary, and that its abandonment has nothing to do with the abandonment of the cause. 'We have,' we say, 'absorbed what is proved true in your discoveries. And now attack us here if you will; but do not go on storming into an empty camp and then saying that you have conquered the Christian host. It is only a few camp-followers whom you are slaying; the veteran army is untouched.'

At this moment, however, the mass of the army is making the transition. It has not yet understood where it is going to, nor the capabilities of the position it will occupy. Naturally it is harassed in its march, and though it does not lose its faith and courage, it does suffer a little from confusion. Some, on the assumption that it still holds verbal inspiration, prove that the whole of the Bible is unworthy of credit as a revelation,

and it is rather difficult to convince these people that verbal inspiration is not to be forced on us now, because some may have held it once. And when, with the vanguard, we deny that inspiration brings infallibility to any parts of the Bible which belong to the domain of science or historical criticism, we cut the ground from under the feet of our opponents by denying absolutely their major premiss. We have changed our front. They must seek another field of battle, a new form of the argument, if they can find it. Meanwhile, as we are making this transition, a number of minor attacks are made on us—masked attacks, some of which we know will answer themselves, and need only be allowed to exhaust themselves; others, however, being in themselves interesting, and opening out attractive questions, are well worth replying to, especially when they lead us to dwell on certain distinctive elements in Christianity. One of these we shall speak of to-day.

The more active investigation of the ancient religions brought to light many curious likenesses of Christianity. Not only many of its typical thoughts, but some of the very phrases used by Christ and his followers were discovered in the writings of Buddhists, Brahmans, Sikh doctors, Greeks, Romans, and Jews, who had lived before his time. It was at once declared that the revelation in the Gospels was not an original revelation, that Christ Himself was no more than other great teachers had been, that what He said had been said before Him. At the present time this attack has been more plainly made in public and social discussion by a comparison of the teaching of the Talmud with the teaching of Christ,

and the renewed inference by many persons whom one meets, that the latter was not original.

In replying to that I put aside the question of dates, though no critical proof has been offered that the sayings in question which are similar in the Talmud and Christianity were actually in existence before Christ.

But I am willing to surrender this point, and to meet the whole matter on grounds which will include an answer to the other member of the question,—that is, the likeness of Christ's words, not only to the words of the Jewish, but also of Hindoo, Greek, and Buddhist doctors. The Talmudical question by itself is of small importance. It runs up into a larger question; it is part of a whole, and to that whole we reply.

First. We need not be at all astonished at this similarity; on the contrary, we ought to be surprised if it did not exist.

I may approach what I mean by an analogy. There are certain myths common to almost all nations, not only to the Aryan, Semitic, or Turanian separately, but to all of them alike. Now these myths stand on a somewhat different ground from those which arise out of the transference of poetic language used with regard to physical phenomena into a mythology of gods and heroes, for myths of this class vary with the various races. They occupy also a different ground from those which arise out of modifications of human development by race or climate, or any external cause. For they arise directly out of those consistent and universal properties of human nature which are as unchanged in all races as the plan of the vertebral column is in all the vertebrata. I believe myself that

they must develope out of human nature; that, given human nature, certain stories are sure to emerge, so that if a new race of human beings were to arise in some unreached corner of the world, and be entirely secluded for centuries from other men, we should find, on its discovery, these constant stories existing in that country.

Now apply this analogy to the question before us. There are certain fundamental axioms of religion, which, supposing the religious impulse to exist in human nature, must in the course of centuries work their way through all error to the surface. They lie hid in the very essence of human nature. Existing during the era of savagery, they are certain, after it has past, to develope themselves as guiding principles of feeling and action. The mass of the common people will be influenced by them unconsciously, but those men who rise above the mass in thought, and seclude themselves for contemplation, will finally come to see them clearly, and having seen them will express them. It is almost certain, by the hypothesis, that they will be stated in all nations by such men in words which bear the closest similarity. For instance, 'do unto others as ye would they should do unto you' is a spiritual saying which appears in many other religious books than the Talmud, and the extreme simplicity of the thought will naturally secure its expression in almost identical phraseology. In fact, how else can we express it?

It is, therefore, no matter of astonishment to me, but the contrary, when I find that those sayings of Christ which express fundamental ethical truths of human nature have been expressed before and in similar

phraseology. If He be, as we believe, perfect Humanity, it would be passing strange if He did not state the ancient truths of humanity—and how else could He state them than in their natural, easy, unsensational form? They were axioms, they had to be axiomatically stated.

We have now some grounds on which to frame our answer to the objection that Christ was not original. It is said, and as if it condemned his revelation: 'See, Christ says nothing new.'

But ought we to expect the Saviour to be original in these points? Did He claim entire originality by itself, as any mark of his mission? Was there no light before his advent, no law written in men's hearts? And when He arrived on earth, was He, in a vain striving after originality, to neglect and ignore the light and the law which his Father had given to the nations before He came. On the contrary, He accepted these things as Divine, embodied them in his teaching, and practically said to men, These things which My Father's Spirit taught you in the past, I redeclare in the present, with His authority.

The fact is, He chose the old expressions by preference, when He could. He did not wish to be original in these points. For He knew that his Father had been working hitherto.

Therefore, I repeat, one of the deepest parts of his work was to resume in Himself all the past truth, to realise in Himself all the past ideals. He came to embody the longings of all mankind, to gather into Himself all the scattered lights of God which had shined before Him in men's souls, and condense them into a perfect star of Truth.

He came to be Man, to represent in Himself Hindoo, Arabian, Chinese, Greek, Roman, Jew—all nations and tongues; for this follows directly from what seems the opposite, but is the converse statement—that in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, but He is all and in all. And as, one after another, we find in these various peoples Christ's phrases before Christ, we rejoice—it only proves our point—that He absorbed all the floating truths of humanity, passed them through the purifying crucible of his soul, cleansed them of their dross, and built them up with others which He revealed, into a temple of stainless gold.

Our next question is:—In what points did Christ's teaching of these common truths differ from the Jewish teaching of them? What were the original elements in his revelation?

They were mainly two. First, He wove these truths up with a human life; and secondly, He made them common coin. He went in and out among the people, preaching and living these truths. And it followed, that He caused a religious revolution.

But the revolutionary nature of his work is one of the objections made against it. It is said that his work could have been done without Him; that, in fact, the main truths He taught were slowly filtering into Jewish society, and even into Gentile society, from the great reservoir of wisdom among the sages of the Jews, and that their slow dispersion of wisdom was unattended by the evils of a revolution and subject to no reaction. Whereas, this young enthusiastic genius—so one has

heard the Saviour characterised—brought up in Galilee, where education was not so well maintained as in other parts of Palestine—broke in upon the quiet progress of truth, and hurried it forward into a revolution in which much excellent truth, being given too soon, was afterwards lost or perverted. And lastly, that his attacks on the Scribes and Pharisees as recorded in the Gospels are proof of his want of high training, and even of his ignorance, for the very things He taught were being taught by the best among those whom He satirized with such intemperance.

We reply—reserving the whole question of the evil or not of a religious revolution at this time for another sermon—first, that history does not confirm the theory that the high teaching of the Jewish sages was having much influence upon the world. We are told that they taught a large tolerance and a profound charity. Where is the proof that this teaching was effective?

Love to one's neighbour as to oneself—patience under injury—a universal spirit of charity even among those alone who held a common faith—that men should not seek the highest place—that the true master was as one who serveth—these things do not seem to have had the smallest influence among the Jewish parties during the last fatal war with Rome.

And as to the influence of these truths upon the Gentile world, how many proselytes do we find, and how were they treated by the boasted tolerance of the higher Judaism? A few swallows do not make a summer, nor a few thousand proselytes a regenerated world. Nor does admission into the outer court of the Temple and

exclusion from the inner say much for the perfect liberality of the Doctors of the Law.

The fact is, however much they taught these truths, they did not teach them so as to make them influential.

As to the statement that there were Pharisees to whom Christ's denunciations did not apply, no one ever doubted it. There are always men who stand apart from the violence and bigotry of their time, and the more bigoted the greater number are, the more will these isolate themselves. Of such a type Gamaliel is an instance. But such men, in their turn, react upon the mass and make its narrowness still more narrow, if narrowness be the tendency of the time. Moreover, as we shall see, the isolated culture of these men was, in itself, almost worse than bigotry. It threw the common people back into deeper ignorance. One may imagine the scorn with which Gamaliel would have treated men like the common Galileans whom Christ collected round Him, from the ill-concealed contempt with which he treated the Sanhedrin itself. The more one considers the matter, the more it seems that Christ's reproofs were well deserved. It may well be that there were a few wise and good men who did not share either in the scorn or the violence of the period. But we have no right to impute their wisdom to all the hierarchy in the face of much evidence to the contrary. Six oak trees in a wood do not make it an oak wood.

But it is said again that the sayings of these wise men were household words among the Jews, and that Christ only repeated them. Why then, I ask, did they not tell upon the world as the words of Christ did?

Why did they not inspire men to go forth and preach them to the world? Why did they not make an army of martyrs? Why did they not overrun in a few years the Greek and Roman worlds? Why did they not destroy Heathenism?

The answer to this will answer also our previous question: in what points did Christ's teaching of these common truths differ from the Jewish teaching of them?

The Jewish teaching did not succeed because it was not embodied in a person. Christ's teaching differed from that of the Jewish sages, first, in this, that it was these truths made real in a life.

The teaching in the Jewish schools was of a noble religious type. But independent of the fact that the higher truths were not communicated to such persons as the shepherds of Bethlehem, the teaching was teaching and no more. No one dreamed of going among men and living the truths he taught. And the great mass of the people do not realise things by description. They must see in order to know. A lecturer gives a clear and accurate account of the sea to a class of inland persons not gifted with much imagination, and they now possess a mild interest in the information, but none in the sea itself. On the whole, they do not care to pursue the subject further. But suppose that the lecturer could suddenly transport his pupils to the Atlantic, and say, 'Look there; that is the ocean.' They would not know as much about it as if they had listened for hours to his lectures, but they would have what they had not before—a vivid interest in it; they are inspired to study

it for themselves, and in the end, because they love it, and are thrilled by its power and beauty, they learn to know it better than they could by any elaborate description.

So here, truths were given by the Jewish sages to the people in the schools, analysed, reduced to proverbial forms, and they had no universal effect; they produced no vital interest.

At last one comes who says, I am the Truth and the Life. Look here—see my works, behold my life, what I say, and do, and live; that is the mind and the character of God. It is easy to put that to the test; the spectators are interested; they do not understand the theory of truth so well at first, but they are thrilled, inspired, impelled. They cannot rest till they have seen all they can; they comprehend what they see; they return again and again to the human realisation of the truth.

This was the manner of Christ's teaching, and the influence of it crept into the study of men's imagination.

Again, it is hard to love merely ideal truth. Unless truth is connected with a person whom one can love, it does not get afloat, it lies stranded on the beach. Preach such a truth as 'Love your neighbour as yourself,' and it has but little attractiveness till you have connected it with the life of some one who has fulfilled it. But then men's hearts are stirred, they love the man and necessarily the truth which made the man. Then love gives it vogue—a fire burns in our hearts; we must speak or die; we speak, and the fire is communicated; it runs from soul to soul, spreading, kindling

as it goes. We want truth embodied in a person whom we can love.

It was because this was done by Christ that Christianity succeeded where Jewish wisdom failed. A great love to a man arose, mingled with a profound veneration for his character. Both these, love and reverence, were irresistible. Men's hearts were drawn to Him as the seas are to the moon. He had laid down his life for them; they would die for Him. He had borne witness to the truth in death; they would die for his truth. He had lived among them a perfect life, and what He taught was guaranteed and glorified by it. It was not so much truths or a system of truths which they saw. It was Christ as the incarnate Truth. A central point was given to which all the rays of truth could be traced, at which their inner harmony was seen; and at once the teaching which had this human centre took fire, force, movement, expansion, and radiated over the world.

This leads me to the second and the last reason I shall give for the success of Christianity as contrasted with the failure of the Jewish sages. It was preached to the common people.

I have said that truths require to be lived—nay, more, to be died for—to give them vogue. But that they should be lived and died for, they must come into the open arena of the world, among the mass of every-day men and women; they must come out of the retired cloisters of the schools. That they should emerge clearly and take distinct outlines, such outlines as the populace can grasp, they must be brought into direct opposition

with their contraries in the popular tendencies of the times. They must not be truths of the study, but of the fishing-boat, and the market, and the exchange, and the country village. They must not be entrusted to a few scholars, but sown broadcast over the people. They must not avoid attack, but meet it; they must not be kept back for fear of revolutions, but must expect revolutions and flourish in their atmosphere.

This was the element in which Christ lived, and these were the tests He chose for his teaching. He made his truths common property; He taught them to all alike. He made no conditions, required no special training. They were men to whom He spoke; that was enough for Christ, and his practice was the keynote of all succeeding efforts, political or otherwise, to secure liberty of life and thought for the people. This was what, it seems, the Jewish doctors did not do. Take the instance of freedom from the bondage of the law. We are told that it was preached before Him. Who ever denied it? We find it, independent of the Talmud, in other ancient writings. But again, the question comes, Why had it no vogue? Why had it no popular fruit? Why did its teaching not create a character like S. Paul's? Why had it no vital, changing, regenerating power?

There was something dead at its root. I believe it was that it was confined to an intellectual oligarchy, possessing that indifference to the advance of spiritual truth which accompanies a merely intellectual conception of it; that universal tolerance which lets things run along, and which loses its good when it becomes

tolerant of evil; that hatred of revolutionary movements which has ever characterised the aristocracy of culture.

Now, if there is one oligarchy more tyrannical and dangerous to true liberty than another, it is an oligarchy of culture; and that was the position of the Jewish sages, exceptions of course being understood. It is inferred, however, that the Jewish schools were democratic because every man was taught a trade, because among the roll of their wisest men there were tanners, carpenters, gardeners, men of the common people. But if these men were drawn from the ranks, it does not follow that they were fond of enlightening the class from which they sprang. On the contrary, these are almost invariably the worst defenders of their own class, the most anxious often to keep up a barrier, the greatest despisers of those among whom they once lived: and as to the democratic element in such a society, it may last for a time, but we know from the history of the mediæval Church, which drew priests, cardinals, and popes from the lowest ranks, what its boasted sympathy with the people came to in the end.

No; I think we have every reason to conclude that the text, 'this people who knoweth not the law are cursed,' is a real picture of what was going on in Palestine at the time of our Lord. If so, can you wonder at his denunciations? If the mass of the Pharisees were keeping up this esoteric learning, this seclusion of higher truths to a cultured few, are not Christ's words of indignation justified?—are you astonished that the very truths these men held turned to poison in their hearts? Above all, is it at all astonishing that these truths had

no extension, that they did but little work, that they produced no universal religion? The chill region of intellectual knowledge of spiritual truth in which these doctors lived exiled from it popular enthusiasm. Connected with an exclusive class, they could not be teachers of the common people. They themselves wanted the strong life and faithful energy which belong to the common people. Only in that element could great truths organise themselves into a religion for men. Aristocracies, and especially aristocracies of culture, are not naturally religious; democracies are. The religions of the world have arisen from and been supported by the people. It is very plain that Christ saw and acted upon that. He committed his truths to fishermen, publicans, villagers, to Galilæans, to unlearned and ignorant men, whose hearts were free and natural, whose intellects were capable of new thought; He threw Himself upon the common people. He gave the loftiest truths to all men alike. He rejected all clinging to culture which tended to isolate a class or to limit the universality of his work. He poured 'light and sweetness' on men, but it was a light which shone like the sun upon all alike, it was a sweetness of thought and feeling which expended itself upon the unwise as well as the wise, the outcast from society as well as the rabbi who was honoured in the Temple.

It was partly this that made his teaching stream like a river and swell like a sea. It was this partly that sent it in a few years over Judæa, Greece, Rome, and Asia. It was partly this that made all nations flow into it. It was partly this that gave it its expanding,

its conquering power. It was partly this that chimed in with the great movement of the world towards the overthrow of a corrupt imperialism and a cruel oppression of the people. It was partly this that sent its mighty waves onwards in ever increasing volume, till they drowned beneath their tide the temples of Paganism and the ruins of the old philosophies.

It was this which was symbolised at his birth, when around his sacred infancy knelt in a common worship the men from the East, the rich, the wise, and the nobly born; the shepherds from the hills of Bethlehem, poor, ignorant, and low born; when intellect and ignorance alike grew wiser by receiving the kingdom of God as a little child.

JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY.

'Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.'—Luke iii. 17.

'It is the glory of Christianity,' says a modern writer, 'that it carried the golden germs hidden in the schools and among the silent community of the learned, into the market of humanity.' Yes, that is one of the glories of Christianity as contrasted with esoteric schools, with that aristocracy of culture which reserves truths to itself or does not care, in learned laziness, to spread them among the common people. Granting that the Jewish doctors possessed, before Christ came, many of the truths He taught, it is plain that, in spite of the large extension of schools, there was no organised missionary effort to spread them among the masses. The phrase, 'this people who knoweth not the law are cursed,' to whatever date we assign the gospel in which it occurs, has its importance when we compare it with another in the gospel of S. Luke: 'The common people heard Christ gladly.' Whatever may have been the excellence of the teaching which lay hid among the wise men of the Pharisees, it is plain that it lay hid, that the mass of the Pharisees stood apart from the

uneducated masses of the people, and felt that to throw truth broadcast before them was casting pearls before swine.

It is plain that though they possessed in their books pleasant stories like the parables, in which truths were represented in simple and natural forms, yet that they had never gone about to recite them to the fisherman and the shepherd, never sought by delightful out-of-door teaching, which laid all nature under contribution, to bring around them a multitude of men, women, and children belonging to the people. Whatever their teaching was, it awakened no popular enthusiasm, it did not seek for the unlearned and the ignorant by preference. It is probable that they feared the results: partly for their own power, which, being exclusive, would be sure to be endangered by any popular movement; partly because they dreaded that a popular religious movement might pass into a political one, and involve them with the Roman governor. Moreover, the very theory which depreciates Christianity, in contrast with the higher Judaism, of itself denies that the Jewish sages communicated their truths in an unrestricted manner to the whole mass of the common people. It asks, with a kind of suppressed scorn, what you can expect, when great and golden truths are thrown recklessly among rude and untrained persons, but a whirlwind of aimless enthusiasm, and an overthrow of the quiet house of wisdom. It declares that the revolutionary impulse of Christianity has, while apparently pushing the world forward, in reality put it back, because its truths were bestowed on ordinary men before they

were ready for them. It is a view which has always characterised exclusive cliques of culture, whether intellectual or religious. Our small bodies of clever young men, who have their peculiar admirations in art and poetry, or political science; our exquisitely cultured sects in manners, or in literature, or in morals, or immorals, one and all, but with different vehemence and meaning, say, 'These people who know not the law are cursed.'

I rejoice to feel that Christianity did not accept that ground, nor begin upon it. Neither Christ nor his followers had a shred of that learned exclusiveness which is content to think and contemplate, but shuns the rude touch of the common world. They had no well-bred shrinking from men; they sought out the sinner, the poverty-stricken, the leper, the harlot, and the publican. 'It is to you I have been sent,' said Christ; 'the kingdom of God is come to you as well as to others.' He had no thought that one man, by education, or learning, or genius, or money, or fame, or by anything external, was spiritually better than another. His Father loved men because they were men, and He loved those best who were humblest, meekest, and most loving. He favoured no class, He gave special privileges to no long descent from Abraham. All were Abraham's children who were like Abraham in character. He had no fear of results to Himself or to the people. He did not hold back for an instant because He saw what would follow his teaching—excitement, reaction, many evils, his own death, his followers' persecution, the division of the world into opposing

camps. He accepted all these as necessary, and went forward to bear witness to the truth at all risks, believing that it was sin to keep back truth because it would create disturbance—now that the fulness of time had come.

Hence his action proves that He at least did not hold the theory of the undesirableness of revolutions. Indeed we may assume that as He brought a revelation, He knew that it would upturn the world. Revelations have always caused revolutions. One follows on the other, as an outburst of new life follows the advent of the spring.

There is a certain amount of truth, however, in saying that revolutions are undesirable; that one ought not to make revelations of truths which cause convulsions, when the people are not prepared for these truths. But it is the fashion at present to extend this rule too far—to say that revolutions are always undesirable. It is said, for instance, that the revolution which Luther worked in religious thought was premature, that the learning of the Renaissance, christianised by Erasmus and others of his type, would slowly have percolated through society and regenerated it, without bringing in its train the intolerance, war, bigotry, and division of sects which followed the Reformation. It is an exactly analogous assertion to that which is made about Christianity and the higher Judaism. The only question is—would the percolating process have succeeded; would the teaching of men like Erasmus have had force enough to overthrow the Epicureanism and infidelity which had taken new forms with the revival of learning; could

it live in a period of change, and disturbance, and wars, and become a part of them, and modify them to its own end; would it ever get below the educated and refined strata of society?

It never did get below, it could not touch the people's heart; it was not a popular movement, it shrank from vulgarity and the contact of the common sort; when war came it retired from the field into contemplation; it could not ride on the whirlwind and direct the storm. And as such, it had, like the higher Judaism, no vogue, no rush, no rough life in it, no future. If ideas are to live, I repeat, they must be such as to move the common people.

It was this that Luther did. It may be answered that he clung to princes, and opposed the war against the oppression of the nobles. It is true, but the ideas he gave were ideas which seized on the hearts of the common people, and though his action may have been aristocratic, his thought was making democracy. He claimed in the realm of religion freedom of thought for all, and though he opposed the peasant war, and would have hated the principles of the French revolution, yet these were both the direct results of a teaching which men were not slow to transfer from the sphere of religion to the sphere of politics.

The same is true, certain things being changed, with regard to Christianity and Judaism. Christ, as Luther did, saw that this cloistered wisdom which was not given to the common people would never do anything—that it had not power to overcome the carelessness, immorality, and selfishness of the Jewish and heathen

world, and He chose deliberately the sudden revealing of truth in preference to the system which said: Let truth slowly filter through the world. He chose revolution.

But we cannot imagine that He chose it, as Luther did, without knowing what He did. Luther did not see results; Christ did. He knew, He felt, with the divine instinct of one in whom the heart of the whole race beat, that the revolution which He made was not only not undesirable, but absolutely necessary. For the ideas of the old world were exhausted, at least in their existing form. Those of them which were true needed a new spirit. The fulness of time, as S. Paul says, had come, and if Christ had not acted now, decay would have advanced too far for a resurrection.

The pear was ripe, it would not do to wait till it was rotten. The objection is that the revelation was given too soon, that it produced a convulsion, and had all the faults of a convulsion. But there are times in history when, as in the physical world, the forces which have been generating for many centuries reach at last their maximum of expansion. One touch then, and the earthquake or the revolution takes place. Of the old Jewish and heathen thought there was nothing existing but the superficial crust. Beneath, all had been metamorphosed into elements which wanted but a touch to reorganise themselves into a new form of religion. It was the fulness of time; Christ came; a new element was added to those already in solution, and all leaped into life as Christianity.

The very fact on which so much stress has been laid,

that the higher Jewish thought resembled the Christian thought, is a proof of the metamorphosis of the old Judaic elements. But when it is said that this resemblance or identity made the Christian revolution unnecessary, it is forgotten that though the thought was new the forms were old. The thoughts of Hillel and others could not get into acceptance because new thoughts cannot be communicated through old forms. Christ Himself saw that clearly. No man, He said, putteth new cloth on an old garment. Nay more, the new thought in that case is lost, and so are the old forms. 'The bottles break, and the wine is spilled. But new wine is put into new bottles, and both are preserved.' It is an exact parable of the fate of the higher Judaism and of the success of Christianity.

Again, supposing that Christ had not caused this revolution which upturned the old edifice, the edifice must have perished all the same. It might not have fallen, as He made it fall, in a moment and with a crash, but it would have melted away piece by piece. And if the new ideas had been connected with it and sent forth to the world from it, as the theory we are opposing wishes, the result would have been the destruction, for a time at least, of the ideas. They would have been involved in its ruin. This is what the sudden revolution of Christianity avoided: Christ connected the new thought with a new form, and directed it into a right channel.

This also was of importance, that it should be rightly directed. Had He not come, what would have been the end? Would the new thought have gone on filtering

slowly through the world? By no means. It was too strong for that. Its fountain waters were too near the surface. It was too late for slow filtration. Men strove to keep it back for fear of the excitement it would cause among the people; but they could not altogether restrain it, and it broke forth in isolated places and in portions, which, because they were only portions of truth, took false forms. Already, before Christ came, there had been two political religious revivals of the worst kind. If He had not come, the new thought would have taken the form of a political revolution, and been crushed with it by the Romans; while with its overthrow would have perished also all that was great and noble in the old Judaism. It would have been universal ruin.

Christ came and hewed out for its waters a new and fitting channel. He led it away from the political groove where it would have been destroyed, by uniting it with a spiritual kingdom. 'My kingdom is not of this world.' He added to it other and deeper thoughts. He freed it from the danger which beset it from the side of the Roman government, He gave it free course over a region wide as mankind, but into which the Roman power did not care to enter. By these means He succeeded in retaining all that was good in the past, and made the growth of the new religion successive and not sudden, easy and not violent, healthy and not convulsive. Instead, then, of saying that Christ caused a revolution which put back the progress of the world, we should say that He saved the revolution which was necessary from the violence which would have

brought about its ruin; that He saved it from having to be done all over again, as, to give a political illustration, has been the case with the French revolution.

What now were the characteristics of this revolution? 1. It was destructive. It proclaimed war against the principles opposed to it. In this at least it differed totally from the supposed idea of the Jewish wisdom. To announce war against the old systems, uncompromising war, could not be held in that idea. The theory is that the Jewish sages wished to slowly winnow away the chaff and leave the corn. It is the idea which naturally belongs to a high culture. Every cultivated man allows its excellence, and it is fully contained and accepted in Christianity, the slowness of the growth of which is insisted on again and again by Christ. But there are certain times in history when a great shock is necessary, and those are the greatest men who can see this and boldly risk the danger. There are times when it is too late to expect that the world can be saved by the instillation of good, times when the chaff is so multitudinous and so rotten that the wheat is in a double danger, the danger of being lost, the danger of being corrupted. The only thing then is to burn up the chaff at once with a fire which will not touch the wheat. This, which cannot be done in the physical, can be done in the moral and spiritual world. It is the characteristic property of a noble and living idea, when it gets loose upon the world, to consume all that is base and dead, and to assimilate all that is like itself. Christ saw that the time had come, that the whole world of Jews and heathens was so choked up with chaff that a slow

process would be ruin. He seized the moment, He accepted its dangers, and He sent forth ideas which flew along like flame, consuming, destroying, but also assimilating. 'Whose fan was in his hand, and He did throughly purge his floor, and gather the wheat into his garner. But the chaff He burned up with unquenchable fire.'

It is curious how clearly his Apostles saw, through his spirit, that the race of the old philosophies and of Judaism under its old forms was run. The fabric of Roman heathenism was at its highest external splendour; the fabric of Judaic morality had never been so concentrated, so powerful over the souls of men. It would seem insanity to attack them; it would raise a laugh to say that they were dead. And yet a few unlearned and common men said that both were effete, that their fabrics were rotten inwardly, that they only wanted a push to perish. As such, they were corrupting the world, and no mercy was to be shown to them. And the rain descended and the wind blew and the floods beat upon those specious houses in every word which the disciples of Jesus spake, and they fell, and great was the fall of them. They were founded on the sand. The result proved that Christianity was right, for the victory was won against tremendous odds, not by force of arms but by force of faith and force of thought.

2. But if Christianity was destructive as a revolution it was also preservative. If Christ sent forth ideas which consumed the chaff, He sent them forth also to gather the wheat into his garner. The judgment of the corrupt elements in the Jewish and heathen worlds

enabled Christianity, ere it was too late, to assimilate their scattered wheat. No noble feeling or true thought, either in Judaism or in heathenism, perished. They were taken up and woven into the new fabric. Take an historical instance. Rome had still a splendid code and tradition of law, civilised customs, a majestic mode of building, a literature, an impressive social culture. These were all bound up with an empire which, as the years went on, fell ever more rapidly to pieces. Its death-throes were protracted, but death was there. Now why, when the northern nations came like eagles on this carcase, why did not all these useful elements perish with it? Because when the nations came they found all these elements not only in the dying empire, but in the living Church. Christianity had taken them into itself, assimilated them; and so abounding in life was the new Christian body that it conquered the conquerors of Rome and handed on to the new peoples which grew out of the barbarian hordes the unextinguished torches of Roman literature, of Roman law, of Roman culture, of Roman architecture.

It was the same with religion. At Alexandria, at Rome, in Greece, in the East, wherever Christianity came, it displayed this wonderful power of collecting into itself and using the living thoughts of the past, while it rejected those that had no vitality. It abolished all the old forms in which these living thoughts had been clothed, it took the living things themselves, and modified them so as to unite them to its own life. It was this which soon collected into the Church almost all the intellect of the world of that time.

3. Its third element was a civilising power. Neither Greek science nor Roman culture had power to spread beyond themselves. The Romans themselves—and we have the testimony of the Emperor Julian to this—considered the barbarous Western nations incapable of culture. The fact was that Rome did not try to civilise in the right way. Instead of drawing forth the native energies of these nations, while it left them free to develope their own national peculiarities in their own way, it imposed on them from without the Roman education. It tried to turn them into Romans. Where this effort was unsuccessful, the men remained barbarous; where it was successful, the nation lost its distinctive elements in the Roman elements, at least till after some centuries the overwhelming influence of Rome had perished. Meantime, they were not Britons, nor Gauls, but spurious Romans. The natural growth of the people was arrested. Men living out of their native element became stunted and spiritless.

It was of the first importance, then, that some civilising influence should arise which should permit of free development—which should save the world from the dilemma of being made altogether in the Roman pattern, or of remaining in barbarism.

This was the work of Christianity, and it was done by its ministers, in the first place, not as apostles of culture, but as persons who spoke to the common wants of the spirit of man. They made simple statements which appealed to universal feelings, and for the truth of which they appealed to the necessities of man. God is Love, they said; One has come who will give rest to the weary and heavy-laden; there is a world in which

all men are equal, and all brothers, as children of a heavenly Father; the spirit of man is as immortal as God Himself; the sense of sin in the heart is taken away by a Saviour who redeems us by giving us power to do sin no more. These and others fell like dew upon the thirsty land of the spirit of man, and awoke into life the seeds of the spiritual powers; the resurrection of the soul to life took place. That was the first step. One part of the man began to live naturally, freely, lovingly. But it is the property of life to communicate itself to all parts of the system in which it begins to act; and on the development of the spirit followed the development of the heart and the intellect. And the growth was from within outwardly. The Christian teachers reversed the Roman mode of proceeding. Hence the peculiar character of any nation was not lost in Christianity, but, so far as it was good, developed and intensified. The people grew naturally into their distinctive type and place in the world.

But was it zeal for science or love of philosophy which led men to leave the pleasant seats of civilisation to instruct and help the barbarous nations? Neither Stoic, nor Platonist, nor Judaic Neo-Platonist ever did it. No; the power which led them forth was the kindling within them of a great love to a divine man, who said that all men were his brothers, who had given his life for all, and who declared that those who loved Him should go forth to preach his good tidings, to heal the sick, to bind up the broken heart, to deliver those who were bound, to seek and save the lost. This was work which the exclusive spirit of the Jewish sages could not do.

The missionary spirit was the product of love to

Christ. The civilisation of the barbarians was the product of the missionary spirit.

And now, in conclusion, we resume all that has been said, in another form. That which is true about the great movements of the world is not without its personal interest to us, nor without its analogies in our life. We also have our revolutions.

Much has been said about the crisis which comes upon many young men after their entrance into life, when, after emerging from the university, the first overwhelming impression of the movements and complexity of the great world is made upon them. But little has been said of that more secret upturning of the soul which takes place in manhood, and of which the outspoken early movement is but the forerunner—the little wave which breaks in foam and noise upon the beach, before the long, massive, immense volume of the swell glides silently up the shore to move the very foundations of the breakwater. Men and women rarely speak of this; the only outward sign is a slight tinge of bitterness. But beneath the quietude a tempest is at work. The time comes, when a man knows that if he is to be worth anything, he must be true, he must get rid of all conventional beliefs and understand what he means and on what he can rest. The old forms of his thought are exhausted; the old religion of his childhood has no words for him; the very enthusiasms of his youth he finds but poor images of the unreached ideals which cry aloud within him. By many impulses and events, by loves, sorrows, hates; by clashing with the

world, by unexpected agonies in his own heart; by the weaving and unweaving of life—by the direct speech of God—the elements of a new being have gradually collected beneath the crust of the old. New ideas, new points of view, new perceptions of the world around, new phases of old problems, have gradually accumulated till the ancient forms are no longer able to bear the pressure. The fulness of time has come; a revolution is necessary.

It is sore work when that day arrives, and men are often so tired then that it seems unfair that all the inner life should be again disturbed, and that, not as before on the surface, but down to and throughout the very depths of being. But it is at the peril of our worthiness that we refuse its call, and hush its elements into a false peace; we must go through with it.

The solemn question is—how will its elements break out?—towards the world or towards God? Shall the spirit of Theudas and Judas be at its head, or the spirit of Christ? Will it be ruled by the spirit of meekness, of dependence on a Father, or by the spirit of display and self-dependence? Will the final result of it be—'Not this man, but Barabbas'—or 'For this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, to bear witness to the truth'?

There are many to whom these words of mine, vague as they are, have their meaning. Such secret revolutions are more frequent every day.

I will not say what is the result if the overthrow of the old is followed by an overthrow of all, and faith in God, in morality, in immortality, is drowned; but I will say what this revolution is, if it is towards God.

It is also destructive. It brings with it a living flame which burns up our chaff. It goes forth to consume our evil, and it does not cease. It proclaims war against all that is base, unbelieving, unhopeful, and unloving. It takes us into union with Christ—the hater, the enemy, and the conqueror of evil.

It is preservative. It destroys nothing which is noble in our past; it does not limit or enslave any high thought or true aspiration; it does not crush our nature, where our nature has been godlike. It takes, on the contrary, all things good into itself; it assimilates their elements, and informs them with its own life; it makes them nobler, greater, and eternal, by uniting them to a new and living idea, and by directing them to find their growth and their goal in God, from whom they came.

And lastly, it goes forth to civilise—or, shall we say, to sanctify the whole man. It penetrates to the outlying portions of the soul which as yet have not been touched. It awakens capabilities the existence of which we did not suspect. It brings into harmony with God, interests—such as love of art, or the serious play of imagination, or political or business life—which we thought could not have anything to do with religious life. It institutes and carries out an inward missionary movement to every point of our manifold nature, till the whole man is saved, ennobled, purified; and we are as the world shall be, wholly redeemed and glorified, body, soul, and spirit.

Therefore, O God our Father, come to us through Christ this Advent time. Incarnate Thyself in us. Give to us the revelation which makes revolution.

THE CENTRAL TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY.

'And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.'—John i. 14.

It happened, once on a time, as men went to and fro in the world who were interested in the arts, that they discovered, at different periods, and hidden away in many countries, portions, it seemed, of exquisite statues —a foot, an arm, a torso, a broken hand. Something superb in each of these made men recognise them at once as perfect. Each nation cherished their separate piece as an ideal of art; each drifted into a thousand suspicions as to the author and his intention; each completed the statue from conjecture according to their own ability. At last, owing to the decay of the nations, and to the rise of one upon their ruins, all the several pieces were collected in one museum. They were still considered as belonging to separate nations and periods of art. Dissertations were written and lectures were delivered upon them; the ideal completions which each nation had made of their several pieces were placed beside them, and the completions studied with infinite criticism.

One day, however, when the artist world were collected in the museum, a man whom no one knew,

entered, and slowly went from room to room examining the famous remnants one after another, but passing by the completions of each with some indifference. At last he approached the group of artists: 'Sirs,' he said, 'I have examined your famous pieces of sculpture, and their ideal restorations. The restorations are interesting as examples of art at different periods, but worthless as a foundation for any true ideal. But, did it never strike you that all your pieces are of the same time and by the same hand, and that you have but to bring them together out of their several rooms and unite them? Your ideal statue is among you, and you know it not.' When he had thus spoken, many laughed and some mocked, but a few were found to listen; the greater part, however, as the stranger grew more earnest, became indignant—for what would become of their art theories if he were right?—and drove him out of the museum with ignominy. But the few sought him out, and it is said that they entered the building by night and brought together the remnants, the stranger superintending, and found it even as he had said. They saw the statue grow, piece by piece, into unity, but at the end the head was wanting. A great cry of pity arose—'What!' they wept, 'shall we never see the ideal realised?' But the stranger, as they wept, drew from beneath his cloak the head, and crowned the statue with completeness. And as he did so, he passed away and was seen no more. But the perfect thing remained—the pure ideal of divine art, fully realised at last. Then those few gave up their theories, and their delight in the separate remnants and their restorations, and went

abroad, taking with them the perfect thing, to preach a new kingdom of art; and when men asked them to define and theorise art, they stept aside, and unveiling the statue, said, 'Look and see; this is Art. If you can receive it, you too will become artists. This is all our definition, this is all our theory.' And some believed and others did not, but slowly the new ideal won its way, till it grew to be the rule and the model of the greater part of the artist world.

Of what took place at the museum when the mockers found their pieces gone—of how they fought against the possessors of the statue, and denied that it had anything to do with their lost remnants; of how they made counterfeits of these remnants, and clung to their ancient restorations as the true ideals—I need not tell; nor yet of a more pitiable thing—of how in after times the followers of the true ideal made false copies of it, modifying it, and introducing their own ideas into it, and held up these, and not the perfect statue, for the imitation and aspiration of the world of art. Are not these things written in history? But again and again, the one effort of all true artists since has been to bring back men to the contemplation of that single figure.

This parable illustrates what I have been saying for some Sundays. The scattered truths of the world were truths from God. Men wove diverse religions round the diverse truths. At last Christ came, and did not reject, but brought together in Himself, the previous truths—made them for the first time fit into one another, so that each took its place; and then

crowned them with the completing and new truth—the truth of the Divine Man.

These two things—the bringing into harmony of truths and the addition of the truth of the God Man—are distinctive peculiarities of Christianity, and of these we speak to-day.

It is not difficult to illustrate what I mean by the harmonising of truth. Before the time of Newton, many isolated facts concerning the universe and its motions had been discovered, but they remained like isolated lights at a distance from each other. But when the philosopher came who saw into the life of things, and the theory of gravitation was born, it made the previous truths concordant; their separate lights shot into its brilliant beam, and the beacon blazed by which we read the secrets of the universe. It was then that the astronomer's work became practical. He had a truth which gave tenfold value to other truths, and made them instruments of tenfold power. He had a truth in which all the phenomena of nature were correlated, and as he learnt their several relations, each became a key to unlock the difficulties of the others. Much remained unexplained, but he knew now that investigation and patience were all that were needed. He had the key of the universe in his hand; he was sure of finding out all truth within the sphere of his special business.

This is that which Christ did for us. We have granted that many truths which He declared afresh existed before his time; but they were isolated, their mutual connection was not perceived. Hence they had no

regenerative power, but little practical power. Great men worked at them, carried them out into separate philosophies, but they never got any wide popular influence, and they were finally buried under a weight of conjectures and conceits. The first enthusiasm they had created died away—nor, indeed, did they ever produce that peculiar characteristic of Christianity, an active and unceasing propagandism.

But under the transforming hand of Christ, these truths came together into a perfect whole. The truth of doing good for good's sake became in harmony with the truth of doing good for the sake of immortal life. They had formerly clashed, and there are persons yet who think they clash. The truth that the soul is to be absorbed in God united itself with the truth of the distinct personality of the soul, and in uniting, the one lost its pantheism and the other its isolated self-dependence. The truth that men lived by faith, and the apparently opposed truth that they lived by works, found in the love which Christ awoke to Himself a point where they mingled into one. No truth was left to sound its note alone, but all together harmonised arose into

> That undisturbed song of pure concent
> Aye sung before the sapphire coloured throne.

If this be true, it forms one of the distinctive qualities of Christianity. No heathen philosophy had done it, no heathen religion had attempted it. In fact, they had not the materials. No Jewish Doctors had succeeded in it, though they had attempted it. One or two may have had, as had the heathen, glimpses of it—

all had a vague suspicion of it; but it still remained a vision till Christ came and supplied the magic word which gave the spiritual affinity of all truths space and power to act.

Immediately on coming into harmony, they became inspiring principles in men and instruments powerful for practical work. They took new and vigorous developments—as, for example, the truth of immortality. The men who possessed them were conscious of power, and they laboured as if they were secure of victory. They did not mind stating apparently opposed truths; they knew that they could give to men a higher truth, in which the contradictories became two sides of the same truth. And when the glorious oratorio of Christian truth was sung, with parts for every nation, and the chorus rose in which the most diverse found themselves in harmony, men said, This is unique in the world's history. Heathenism, philosophies, Oriental thought, Hebraism, Judaism, have never done work like this.

But what was the crowning truth which completed the ideal statue?—what was the magic word which set separated truths flowing together?—what was the directing element which harmonised the varied songs of truth into a whole? It was the doctrine, or rather the fact, of the Divine Man; the truth of the Word made flesh, the fact that God had entered into Man, had revealed the Divinity of Man, the Humanity of God. This is the central truth of the world. This is the truth without which all other truths fall back into their isolation. This is the key to all the mysteries of life within

and life without. This is the axis on which the whole sphere of religious truth spins round, without a check, in exquisite unity of parts, with exquisite unity of purpose; and this is the essential difference of Christianity, the distinctive declaration of Christianity, the underived and original conception of Christ. No Gentile nation gave it to the world; no Jewish sages brought it forth. It is the only begotten son of Christianity.

It is true, that both east and west sought to realise this idea of the unity of the Divine and Human; and it has been said, on the one side, that it was derived from the Indian religions, and on the other from the Greek.

Let us see if this be true.

In the East, the Hindoo conceived of God assuming the form of man in order to convey truth and to bring man to Himself. God condescends to man—so far it is Christian. But is it the Christian idea? It wants its very essence, the assumption of the whole nature of man into deity. Vishnu, when he returns to heaven, lays aside his human nature. Again, there are many incarnations of Vishnu, in diverse forms; there is therefore no true conception of the essential and complete unity of God and Man: once done, it would be done for ever. Again, as the Hindoo idea developed, its underlying thought of the antagonism between the divine and the human, the infinite and the finite, grew into prominence. We find, when the two are represented as coming together, that the human element is annihilated, and the divine Manhood is therefore

only apparent, and not real. Hence at last arose the Hindoo conception that the perfect spiritual stage of any man was only reached when he himself was lost as an individual, when his Man's nature was consumed in absorption in the Divine. Finally, in Buddhism, both God and Man may be said to have perished in the idea of the absolute Nothing, or, if we take the materialistic view of Buddhism, in the idea of the all-containing world. This is not the Christian thought, nor is it its source.

Turn now to the West, take the Greek effort to find this unity of the divine and human. The Greek commenced at the other end from the Hindoo. The Hindoo began with God, the Greek with man. The Hindoo started from the point of entire resignation to God; the Greek from the idea of free self-development. By active effort of intellect and soul, man, thought the Greek, might attain to union with the Divine, be worthy to ascend Olympus. This is directly in opposition to the Christian idea, that Man's nature receives the divinity through the grace of God, cannot gain it for itself. It leaves out the idea of sin and defectiveness in man, which is, according to the Christian thought, the moving cause of God entering into man. Its end is the exaltation of man, the end of Christianity is the glorification of God in the exaltation of man.

Thus, so far as the great typical religions of the East and West are concerned, the fountain idea of Christianity is underived, original and distinctive. At the same time we see plainly that East and West strove after it, and that Christianity realises for the first time

for them that which they failed to realise for themselves, and realises it so fully that it is only by the help of this Christian idea that we can understand the true tendency and work of the old religions.

It is not then in heathenism: is it to be found in Hebraism or Judaism? In both of these forms of the religion of the Jews, there is that which heathenism wanted—a clear idea of the moral relation between God and the world; but the very clearness of this idea, as it divided, in Hebraism, the All-holy God from unholy man, stifled the thought that there could be such an essential relation between man and God as would make their union possible. We can scarcely imagine any Hebrew forming out of his religion the idea of Jehovah becoming incarnate in man. There was a great gulf between man and God. Later on, the wiser Jews, feeling this separation and its spiritual pain, sought to bridge over the gulf by the ideas of a mediating emanation, or of angels who linked the infinite God to His finite children; but the end was, that these somewhat usurped the idea of God without giving the idea of man. Later still, there arose the idea which has been now revived, that the revelation of God to man was only a general inward revelation of God to the spirit; that the divine and human were always mingling in the heart of every faithful and righteous man. The latter part of the statement holds a truth, but the whole is not the Christian idea: first, because it renders any incarnation unnecessary for man; and secondly, it denies the historical reality of a perfect unity of the nature of God and Man in one person.

According to this last Jewish and modern conception, portions of God's nature are being ever united to particular men. According to the Christian conception, the entire divinity was united to universal Man in Christ. It is not only a communication of qualities, it is a communication of essence.*

Thus, the peculiar doctrine of Christianity stands alone, underived, as from heathenism so from Judaism, but explaining both and fulfilling the wants of both; so that at last, looking back from our standpoint in Christianity, we can see that all the religions of the world before Christianity were a preparation for Christianity, were exhausting all possible ideas that the one great idea might stand out in lonely pre-eminence, and yet take into its loneliness all the isolated truths of the past.

It is not a just theory, then, which says that Judaism, if let alone, would have done the work of Christianity, for the main idea of Christianity was not contained in Judaism. One might as well say that oxygen and hydrogen in the fitting proportions would, if left side by side long enough, form water in the end without the combining touch of electricity. Whatever may be the value of the work of Christianity, centuries of Judaism would not have done it. Judaism was in fact getting farther and farther away from the possibility of arriving at the central idea of Christianity, from the working, impelling, regenerating idea of a human God.

* The subject is more fully expanded in the Introduction to Dorner's *Christology*, from which much has here been taken.

The organic connection of the lesser truths of Christianity with this the greatest, is too great a subject to enter upon now. We will close with a restatement of what we have said as applied to our personal lives.

That which Christ did for the previous truths in the world, He does for us. We live, before we believe on Him, as possessors of isolated religious truths. We hold one at one time and another at another time, till particular truths, being over-insisted on, grow monstrous, and the unity of life is broken. We cannot concentrate our impulses to one end, for they need an inner bond of thought. One idea contends with another and usurps the throne of another. They have no wish to act together. Now it is obedience to the moral law which rules our conduct, till we drift into Pharisaism; now it is the freedom of the Gospel, till we drift into lawlessness. The truths we have are excellent, but disconnected from their brother-truths they tend to become half-truths, and their end is, not uncommonly, either to die of spiritual starvation, or to be changed into falsehoods. Now, as Christ harmonised and united the religious thoughts of the world, so, when He is truly received, does He bring the inner life of the soul into harmony. Under the reign of his love no truth can be pushed too far, for a single truth exclusively dwelt on is the parent of fanaticism or persecution. As the first principle of his rule of the physical world is order, so is it in the spiritual world of our hearts. He allots to each quality its work, He brings the truths we possess into an ordered phalanx, each one in its place and its best place; and, concentrating these, He inspires

them with his spirit, and drives them in penetrating onset against all the evil and falsehood in the soul.

They act together, because, in their centre, as the king of truths, they possess the knowledge that the whole nature of Man is united to God.

But here we pause. What that truth does for us as life goes on, and age and failure come; what it reveals when the mountain-pass of death is crossed amid the freezing air; what visions of a glory of the Lord to be revealed in Man, when the rose of eternity expands its infinitely foliaged cup, where every leaf is a nation and the stem which bears them Christ—we leave for the present to the future; it is enough for us to-day, that our statue is complete in idea. We have seen the blind strivings of the world accomplished in the Incarnation. We have seen the o'ermastering attraction with which Christ drew all truths into Himself, and concentrated in Himself their light, so that indeed He rose upon mankind as its universal sun. Let us part with the majestic thought, let it be our companion for the week.

THE CENTRAL TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY.

'And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.'—John i. 14.

The doctrine which we spoke of last Sunday as the distinctive doctrine of Christianity was the doctrine of a divine humanity. Whatever else Christianity derived from other religions, this at least was underived. Whatever else was interwoven into the Christian web from the threads spun by Jewish sage, or heathen philosopher, this was not. It was itself the warp on which the whole Christian woof was woven. Both Eastern and Western religions had seen this truth of God and Man in one, floating, a nebulous dream, before them, and had tried to resolve it into the guiding star of their thought, but their efforts closed in failure. The Oriental, beginning with God condescending to man, ended, at the very moment when he seemed nearest to the true conception, in a deification of the universe, in which God and man were both lost. The Western, beginning with man aspiring to God, found its grave in the Alexandrian Platonism, which, rejecting the deified world of the Greeks, ended in the conception of one Divine substance before which everything finite was only phenomenal, not actual. The Greek ended where the Hindoo began.

The circle of failure was complete.* But the proclamation of the true idea explained the failure, and realised the dream. Christ came, and the fountain idea of a true union of the Divine and Human broke upwards through the mountain-top of the world, and streamed on all sides down through the radiating valleys of the nations, drawing into itself all the local religious streams, and developing from itself new rivers of spiritual ideas.

Wherever it came, it fertilised the exhausted plains of human thought; wherever it came, new systems of thought rose like stately cities on its banks; wherever it came, it was the highway of civilisation, uniting by its waters the fresh conceptions of the younger peoples to the wise ideas of the older, till both were bound together in spiritual commerce on its stream.

All this has the vagueness of a comparison, but there is not a touch in it for which I have not a meaning, for to me all Christianity, and all the work of Christianity can be directly traced to one central source, the fact that in Christ Jesus Humanity was revealed as divine and Divinity as human; each side of the truth being equally important—the entering of God into man, the entering of man into God. This doctrine I accept, and for once I must deviate into the first person, not on the authority of Church or Bible, but because I feel the necessity of it to me. Not that I am foolish enough to despise authority. The fact that after nearly three hundred years of intellectual labour and of spiritual feeling upon this subject, the present doc-

* See Dorner's *Christology*, Introduction.

trine emerged as a result cannot be without force to those who believe not only in the power of man to work out truth, but also in the directing influence of a Divine Spirit on the world. But authority must be kept in its place. It is not the edifice, it is the buttresses of the edifice. It does not make a doctrine true to you or me, but if we feel a doctrine to be true, it is a support and strength to feeling. It is the second, not the first. Make it the first, and you must become the bigot and the denouncer of all who do not hold your doctrine. Make it the second, and you are freed from the dreadful burden of condemning the Theist, and unchristianising the Unitarian. We feel that the doctrine of the Divine humanity of Christ is true. Well, does that lead us to condemn the Theist, or the Unitarian? On the contrary, to sympathise with them to a certain point, because their essential elements are included in the doctrine we believe. We have reached it first through Theism, then through Unitarianism, and if we denounce either, we denounce the stages through which we have attained the higher form. Theism is true, but there is a higher truth. To believe in it now as the whole of truth appears to us to be an anachronism. To hold what it asserts as a part of truth appears to us to be a necessity. Unitarianism has a higher truth than Theism. Listen to this passage: 'Not more clearly does the worship of the saintly soul, breathing through its window opened to the midnight, betray the secrets of its affections, than the mind of Jesus of Nazareth reveals the perfect thought and inmost love of the All-ruling God. Were he the only born—the

solitary self-revelation—of the creative spirit, he could not more purely open the mind of heaven; being the very Logos—the apprehensible nature of God—which, long unuttered to the world, and abiding in the beginning with Him, has now come forth and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.'* The line which divides that statement from the highest truth we accept of Christ's nature is very thin. We accept the statement, but, we pass beyond it to a higher conception which includes it. Hence I, for one, cannot condemn either Theist or Unitarian, without condemning a portion of my own belief.

But what proof is there that the doctrine of which you speak is the highest? demands the Theist. No proof amounting to demonstration, I answer. But the want of the power of demonstrating the truth to others is not peculiar to us. Can the Theist demonstrate the existence of God? can the Unitarian, immortality? No! no more than I can the truth of the Incarnation. We are all, as persons, thrown upon the witness in our own hearts. We can only see that which we have light to see.

But we can approach a decision as to which doctrine is the highest by putting certain questions. On which theory is the relation of man to God, and of God to man, most clearly and most nobly explained? Which theory explains the greatest number of the facts and feelings and problems of the spiritual world? From which theory follows most easily and most consistently the

* *Endeavours after the Christian Life*, vol. ii. p. 349. By James Martineau.

great religious ideas common to us all—the Fatherhood of God, the universal brotherhood of the race, the progress of man through evil to final good. Which theory has the greatest number of analogies to the ideas of the revelation of God in science?

On some of these points I have already spoken; we choose only one to-day—the natural development of the great religious ideas from the doctrine of the Incarnation.

But first, with regard to the doctrine itself, and the place which has been given it. I said that it included the truths taught by the Theist and the Unitarian.

The Theist will reply, It does not include my truth; it denies it by the addition of an untruth. I say that God is One; you say that the One God is Three.

It is scarcely a fair way of putting it, for we go on to say that the Three are One. In terms, at least, we aver the unity of God. Our term 'the three persons' does not mean three distinct and separate beings, but three modes of being in one primal Being. We assert, that is, a complexity of being in God, in contradistinction to the assertion of a unity which seems to us an assertion of uniformity of being, not of unity of being.

Now there is no doubt that the more complex a nature is, the higher it is; and the more uniform it is, the lower it is; and therefore any conception of God which represents His being as complex, is higher than one which represents His being as uniform. I cannot hold the old Hebrew, or the theistic conception of God, without feeling that I am far behind the vanward of thought, in that position into which a people emerging

from heathenism would naturally enter, as, for example. the Hindoo youth are doing now. My conception of a true unity of being, unless the teaching of science and of the higher national politics is useless to me, must include complexity of being. This is the truth which lay hidden in, and gave life to, the errors of Polytheism; and instead of throwing away the whole of Polytheism as abominable, I take the root idea of it and say, the Being of God is multiform in its oneness. I see in Polytheism the unconscious striving of the human mind after a higher idea of God than that of the Theist. It failed, it developed error after error, but it was not useless; it prepared the world to receive the truth which explained and realised its striving—the truth of the Trinity in Unity.

He is at least on the threshold only of metaphysical thought who says that a truth which asserts a threefold or fourfold Being in God denies His unity of Being. Suppose that the one constant force of the physical universe were a living Person. Should I deny his unity of Being because I said, he is the force electricity, he is the force magnetism, &c.; and yet he is Force alone; he is one and he is twenty; he is twenty in one and one in twenty? I do not deny unity of Being in this case; on the contrary, I make it more rational, I clothe it in higher thought when I maintain its complexity.

Again, it is said that the Incarnation is an idea degrading to God.

Surely there may be another aspect of the question. Is it apart from a noble conception of God that He

should desire to partake of the lives of His creatures for the loving purpose of comprehending them more perfectly?

But it is replied, that God without that does comprehend us perfectly in Himself? In thought, yes, but in experience, no. God is impassible, absolute, infinite. How is He, with all His love, to comprehend in Himself a life like ours, which is relative, full of suffering, and finite? This was the religious difficulty of the ancient world. We saw last Sunday how they strove to solve it by endeavouring to bring God and man into unity. They failed to do it, but they felt that it was necessary.

There seems thus an intellectual necessity for the Incarnation. Moreover, instead of jarring against our idea of God, the Incarnation seems not only natural, but delightful to conceive. How often have we ourselves, when affection for the lower creation has been kindled in us, desired in idea to enter into their life for a time, and then to return into ourselves again with a new consciousness of a lower life than our own, and with increased ability and desire to help. And if we have felt this towards a nature not kindred to our own, how much more may God have felt it towards a nature in direct kinship with Himself?

It is a noble thought: it ought to commend itself to all who have ever loved purely and passionately, and desired to become at one with the being of those they loved.

I feel that God desires to be born into the being of all the intelligent creatures that He has made, and I ask, with reverence, how do we know that He has not

incarnated Himself in other beings than in Man? If other intelligent and spiritual, but defective beings, live elsewhere in the universe, it may be that the Incarnation on our earth is not an isolated fact; it may be that in His manifold unity there may be many creature-consciousnesses. Trinity in unity is the expression of the eternal nature of the Being of God in its relation to us. But the Being of God may be infinitely more complex than that. We may learn hereafter that our phrase is but a poor expression of the thousand modes of Being in the unity of God, that the Incarnation has many analogies in the universe.

It does not seem irreverent to make these speculations. Irreverence exists in the intention, and the intention here is to exalt and not to lower our idea of the nature of God.

But what we have to do with is this—the idea of the union of God and man as the central truth of the highest religion. We dwelt last Sunday on its uniqueness, we have suggested to-day its naturalness; we proceed to show how easily there flows from it the three great religious ideas of the world.

And first, the idea of the Fatherhood of God. According to our doctrine, God, in Christ, has taken all mankind into Himself as a dependent part of His Being. That is the idea, and it depends on this—that Christ, in our belief, was not only a man but Man—the realisation in one Person of the whole idea which God had of Man, so that while He represents us each to ourselves as we ought to be, He also represents and has taken the whole of the race into God. In God,

therefore, there is now the perfect Man, real to Him, ideal to us. Man in the eternal and actual world is one and eternal; but on earth and in time he is imperfect, and divided into many men in different stages of development. These several parts of the great whole which is to be, must, if our doctrine be true, be brought up to the level of the ideal Man which exists in God. God is bound to them in thought as He is bound to His own nature; and as He is a Person, and they are persons, that binding relation is a personal relation, the relation of a loving Thinker to the thing thought, the relation of a loving Creator to the thing created. A relation, therefore, of education, of infinite care and pity, of redemption; the relation of a Father to an erring child, who, seen as what he will be, not as what he is, is not looked upon by God as outside Himself, but felt, since he has been united to all men in Christ, as a part of Himself. This conception makes the Fatherhood of God a glorious reality; makes all the duties which belong to Fatherhood imperative upon God by His loving act of Incarnation.

But since God has been united in Christ—not to a few, but to the whole of the human race—this Fatherhood is necessarily universal. All doctrines of favouritism are at once expelled by this; all despair of races is at once destroyed; all hopelessness for those who suffer, and those who are evil, perishes; all contempt of our brother-men is no more, for all men are divine in God since they have been in Christ.

Then comes a crowd of other religious ideas derived

as naturally from this as rivers from a fountain. For there follows, if the same belief be true, the necessary immortality of all mankind. Men are not becoming immortal; they are, since all mankind has been united to God, immortal now. Death, annihilation, must touch God Himself ere it can touch the meanest human soul, for all the race is hid in Christ, and Christ is hid in God.

So, also, the dreadful dream that anyone can be for ever exiled from God and buried in ever-enduring evil passes away and ceases to sit as a nightmare on the bosom of religion. For if all men are in idea, and by right of Christ, contained in God, all men are in idea and by right holy. Do you think that God will fall short of His own conception? do you think that having once seen the whole race as separate from sin in Christ, He can for one moment endure the thought that any one man or woman should be left for ever to the horrible embrace of evil? That men should contend with evil we can understand, that they should suffer we can bear, that they should wander far from their Father's house and waste their immortal substance we can endure, for they are then treated as free subjects who must develope by effort and through failure; but that all this should be done without an end except a cruel end, that all the pains God takes with us (and surely if anything is plain to the worst of us, that is) should be cast as rubbish to the void; that He should have descended to assume the nature of all men, and made it divine in Himself, only to cast away as refuse to be burned the greater part of those whom

He had made holy in Himself—all this does now so contradict and vilify His revelation, that it is no wonder that the idea of everlasting damnation should have destroyed men's belief in the idea of the Incarnation. He who believes the one cannot rationally, though he may blindly, believe in the other. No; the Incarnation, rightly conceived, necessitates the final righteousness, godlikeness of all. How long the making righteous may endure, none can tell; but through sphere after sphere of just retribution, through the change of the outward sensuality of earth into inward suffering, through the change of the miserable circumstances of earth into happy circumstances—for I often think that what many a poor criminal wants to make him right is not punishment so much as comfort—step by step, age after age, in world after world perhaps, all the past dead are moving on, all the future dead will move on, a mighty stream, to mingle in the ocean of the righteousness of God on that far-off but certain day when the idea of the Incarnation of God in the essential Man will be completely realised—that hour to which the Apostle, in a lofty flight of inspiration, looked forward when he said, 'And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.'

On the last of the great religious conceptions which follow inflexibly from the fact of God in Man — the conception of an equal and universal brotherhood of the race—I have often dwelt from this place. It is sufficient to say now that its practical results are as

important as they are many. It is the foundation of all effort to civilise barbarian peoples; it is the root and end of all noble legislation, of all just government. It is the inspiring impulse of the theory and practice of national education; it is the mainspring of all charity; it is the fountain from which flow all redemptive measures for the outcast and the criminal; it is the principle on which all the relations of capital and labour should be based; it is the idea which overthrows all tyrannies, all oppression, all slavery, all exclusive castes, all class domination, all attempts to concentrate all the land and all the money of a country in the hands of a few. It has been the war-cry and the watchword of all noble revolution. It is leading the peoples of the world, slowly but surely, to a political future of equality, for religious conceptions are naturally and necessarily transferred to political; it is leading the various nations of the world to a far-off international union, on a higher ground than that of commercial interest. It will finally end in the destruction of all international and individual envying, strife, vainglorying, and trickery to get the upper hand; and in the establishment of a unity of mankind in which all shall be equal, free, and fraternal, and yet all diverse and individual, so that the unity of the human race in some sort, like the unity of God, will exist in the midst, and because of an infinite manifoldness.

Lastly, these three great Christian ideas of the Fatherhood of God, the progress of the race towards final good, and the brotherhood of all men, are, like the idea out of which they are born, underived from any other teaching, and original to Christianity. No Eastern or

Western religion taught them, no Jewish sages conceived them in anything like a practical form, in anything like their full extent. We find as it were filmy phantoms of them here and there, we do not find their substance. Christ sent them forth to run as living fire through the world, and their life is derived from the fact of the union in Him of God and Man.

It is no answer to say that they have been shamefully misrepresented, practically denied by Christians in the history of the Christian Church; that they have often found their exponents in men called infidels and atheists. Whoever used them, Christ gave them; and they lead the world. Nor can we charge upon Christianity their slow advance, their comparative failure as yet to accomplish their work, their caricatures. Great ideas are slow of fulfilment; great ideas are especially liable to caricature, great ideas are subject to great failures on their way to victory, and all in proportion to their greatness.

We may expect their slow development. 'The Lord our God is one Lord.' How long did the Jewish people take to learn that? Nearly a thousand years. One of the first things we have to learn, if our judgment of the progress of the race is ever to be just, is that Christianity, and mankind with it, must move forward into fulness of truth almost as slowly as the earth into fitness for man.

We may expect that monstrous caricatures will be made out of them by men insisting on portions of them torn away from their whole; we may expect that they will be made the ministers of the exclusive-

ness and intolerance they came to destroy; we may expect that they will be driven into extremes; but instead of crying out failure on Christianity, we should realise that these things are natural, that ideas when first sown, or when first reclothed in new forms, are almost always carried beyond their golden mean by the excitement which they create; that it seems to be a law that before ideas are clearly seen as they are, men must exhaust all their possible excesses and defects, must experience all their wrong forms before they can grasp their essence.

Such at least has been, and often will be in the future, the fate of the Christian ideas. But they still endure, rising out of all error and mistake, like Alpine summits after tempest, pure, and clean, and fair. They still live under a thousand forms, the elements of life and movement in mankind—the Fatherhood of God, the progress of man through evil to eternal good, the brotherhood of the race. These are the leading rays which stream from the Sun of Christianity—the idea of the union of Manhood and Godhead in Christ.

THE BEAUTY OF CHRIST'S CHARACTER.

'Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty.'—Isaiah xxxiii. 17.

WITHIN the last ten years, the human nature of Christ has been brought prominently forward in England. This has been due partly to the more direct historical interest awakened in his life by a book like that of Strauss, partly to various foreign studies of his life from the merely biographical point of view; partly to the influence of Unitarians like Channing on our Church, and partly to that of some of our own teachers.

A great deal has been done to present Him more vividly and more historically before us, but we cannot say that enough has been done. There have been but few attempts to trace in Him those subtile shades of feeling, those finer touches of intellectual and poetic sentiment, which, after all, make a man real to us. It is on these I propose to dwell for some Sundays: less on the moral majesty, and more on the exquisiteness of his character; less on the suffering lover of man, and more on the King in his beauty. So doing, we may add something to our conception of his individuality. For when men tell us of his life, and describe his death, and dwell upon his love, He remains still a vague outline

to many of us; but when He stops by the wayside and the women cluster round Him, and He stoops to lay his hand on the children's heads and claim them for his own and for his kingdom; or when, resting by the well, He wakes the uncultured woman's interest by half-mysterious sayings, tinged with something of the Socratic irony, but with greater solemnity and profounder meaning than that of the Sage of Athens—then his personality begins to shape itself within us. We recognise the uniqueness which belongs to a living character. It is by dwelling on these things, and by an analysis of character based upon them, that we may arrive at a deeper, as well as a more critical, knowledge of the intense and universal character of his Human Nature.

In mediæval times this humanisation of Christ for men was done by art. The exquisite simplicity and naturalness of frescoes, such as those in the Arena Chapel, brought Christ and his life home to men's minds. But though natural, these representations did not dwell enough on the distinctly human traits in his life. Series like Giotto's were connected with doctrine, and so far, removed from simple humanity. They grew still more doctrinal afterwards, till, from step to step of idealisation, the Manhood of Christ grew fainter and fainter in art, and He became only Divine and clothed with the terrors of Divinity.

But in the thirteenth century, also, the Dominicans and Franciscans seized on the Passion of Christ as the special object of religious emotion in his life, and taking that piece of his Manhood out of the rest, concentrated men's minds on it alone. Art at once began to supply

the religious demand for representations of the days of the Passion, and the people, taught as much by the paintings as by the preachers, saw the Manhood of Christ only as a suffering manhood. The rest of his human life passed into all but absolute extinction in the intense light which was thrown upon the Passion. Later on, the natural conclusion followed upon this isolation of one part of Christ's human life in art. He became only a fine head or a noble figure in the centre of a picture. He was painted only as a good subject around which artists could throw a poetical or æsthetic air. All awe, all faith, all sublimity, all touch of what was Divine in Him passed away when the last trace of his pure and natural Manhood was lost in art. For they go together.

There are many curious analogies in theology to this limitation in art of the idea of Christ's Manhood. I will only dwell upon a few. After the reformation, and almost up to the present day, Christ, as a man, has been continually more and more hidden from us by the accumulation of theological doctrines round Him. Our theologians have, like the artists, taken Him farther and farther from earth, and isolated Him in his divinity in heaven. We had no Virgin to fall back upon, and the result was that English Christianity was severed more and more from natural human life; and I do not know what might have happened had it not been for the ceaseless protest of the Unitarians, which rose at last into the spiritual beauty of the figure of Christ as presented to us by Channing.

But this is not the only analogy. As art, by insisting

only on the Passion, put out of sight the rest of Christ's life, and produced a maimed representation of his humanity, so did, and so do those theologians, whether Evangelical or Anglican, who dwell too exclusively on the atonement, the death, and the sacrifice of the Passion. The result was and is, that Christianity has been so much made into a religion of suffering, endurance, sacrifice, and asceticism, that all that side of human life which has to do with healthy, natural joy, with love of beauty, with what is called profane poetry and art, with delight in natural scenery, with social companionship, has been, to a large extent, left unchristianised, relegated to the realm of the irreligious.

The result of both these tendencies is similar to that which followed in art, and is seen in the way in which the 'Life of Jesus' by Renan was taken up in England. In a certain sense, that book brought back to reality the human life of Christ, but it was only as a good subject for a piece of artistic work; He was surrounded by all the faded feebleness of Arcadian sentiment; He was the human figure which enlivened pictorial descriptions of Palestine; his character was made to lose, in the midst of a detestable sentimentalism, all moral sublimity.

Let me pursue the analogy one step further. Among all the artists who represented Christ's life, one stands alone for his unique, unconventional, and manifold treatment of it and its subject. Others have represented Him in the common humanities of his life, but they have lacked the power to give with equal grandeur the awful moments in which his mission was concen-

trated. Others have represented Him ideally and with sublimity, but they have not been able to touch such subjects as the Supper at Cana without either making it too ideal or too vulgar. One man alone has mingled, and without a trace of effort, and with a profound conception at the root of his work, the heavenly with the earthly, the divine with the human, the common with the wonderful, the poetical with the prose of daily life, in his representation of the human existence of Christ. That man was Tintoret. In his 'Last Supper,' for example, it is a common room in which the Apostles and the Master meet. Servants hurry to and fro; the evening has fallen dark, and the lamps are lit; those who eat the meal are really fishermen and unlearned men; here and there there are incidents which prove that the artist wished to make us feel that it was just such a meal as was eaten that night by everyone else in Jerusalem. We are in the midst of common human life.

But, the upper air of the chamber is filled with a drift of cherubim, and the haze of the lamp-light takes that azure tint with which the artist afterwards filled the recesses of the 'Paradise,' and the whole soft radiance of the light falls on and envelopes the upright figure of Christ, worn and beautiful, and bending down to offer to one of his disciples the broken bread. It is common human life filled with the Divine. It is the conception of Christ's personality which modern theology ought to possess, because it ought to be the ideal of our own life.

Nor at the right time is sublimity and awfulness wanted in Tintoret's conception of Christ's humanity.

We pass in his work from the lonely majesty of the temptation in the wilderness to the unapproachable agony and solemnity of the burdened head, bowed with the sorrow of the whole world, of the Christ of the Crucifixion, and from thence to the high sovereignty, yet homelike tenderness, of the Christ of the 'Paradise,' and we know as we realise the painter's idea that we look on one in whom the human nature of the whole race has realised that divine glory of self-surrender for mankind and conquest of evil which demands of our hearts the deepest love restrained by the deepest awe.

But when we pass to pictures of Tintoret which represent the senators and merchants of Venice presented to Christ, we do not find the Saviour as the unapproachable Divinity, but as the friend and lover of man. He comes down through the air with expanded arms and joyous welcome, not to judge or to rebuke, but to live among his servants, his face full of delightful human feeling, rejoicing that He can in entire sympathy take a share in their daily work, and bless their common life.

This mingled conception of divine majesty and human friendliness, of heavenly power and earthly homefulness, is the conception of Christ's humanity which we want to arrive at now, and we are drawing towards it day by day. One step was made towards it by the work of one whose honoured age is still with us when he instilled into the whole of modern theology the thought of Christ as the federal Head of mankind, as being Himself the container of mankind, as the incarnation of the humanity which has for ever been in God. That idea secured

for the man Christ Jesus, and secured for ever, our worship and our awe. It separated Him from the race as king; it bound Him up with the race as brother; it made mankind live and move and breathe in God.

But more was wanted, and is wanted. We want a Christ entirely one with all that is joyous, pure, healthy, sensitive, aspiring, and even what seems to us commonplace in daily life; we desire Him, while He is still our King, to be also 'not too bright and good for human nature's daily food,' for business and for home; we wish Him to share in our anxieties about our children; to come and hallow our early love, and bless with a further nobleness all its passion; to move us to quietude and hope within the temple of the past where our old age wanders and meditates; to be with us when our heart swells with the beauty of the world, and to give his sympathy to us in that peculiar passion; to whisper of aspiration in our depression, of calm in our excitement, to be, in fine, a universal friendly presence in the whole of our common life.

I believe that out of that will spring no diminution of reverence to Him, no unhappy familiarity, but rather that deepening of awe, that solemnity of love which arise towards One whom we have lived with daily, and never known to fail in the power—sweetest of all, in a world where so much seems mean and commonplace — of lifting the prosaic into the poetic by the spirit of love, of giving us the sense of greatness in things which seem the smallest, of making life delightful with the feeling that we are being educated through its slightest details into children of the Divine Holiness.

If in the rest of this sermon and for some Sundays to come we can reverently enter into the finer shades of the human character of Christ, we shall gain—I trust without losing the awe which belongs to Him as Divine—a deeper sense of his union with our nature mingled with a love to Him at once more delicate and homelike.

I speak, then, of the beauty of Christ's character as my main subject; and for the rest of this morning's work only of one element in it—of his sensibility; a word I prefer to sensitiveness, for it includes sensitiveness. Sensitiveness is the power of receiving impressions, whether from nature or man, vividly, intensely, and yet delicately. Sensibility is this passive quality of sensitiveness with activity of soul in addition exercised upon the impressions received. The more perfect the manhood, the more perfect is this sensibility. The possession of it in a high degree is the chief source of beauty of character as distinguished from greatness of character; and yet without it no character can reach the highest greatness. The total absence of it is the essence, the inmost essence, of vulgarity. The presence of it in its several degrees endows its possessor, according to the proportion of it, with what Chaucer meant by 'gentilness.' Now, when we talk of the perfect manhood of Christ, and never consider this side of his nature, we must be making a grave omission—an omission which removes from our view half of the more subtile beauty of his character.

It does not seem wrong to say that there was in Him the sensibility to natural beauty. It has always been

my pleasure to think that He also, like us, wished and sought that nature should send 'its own deep quiet to restore his heart.' It cannot be without reason that, when He was wearied and outdone, He called to his disciples to go away into a desert place to rest awhile; that when Jerusalem was loud in his ears, He oftimes resorted to the glades of Gethsemane; that when He desired to pray, He went alone into the hills; that when He felt the transfiguration glory coming upon Him, He ascended the lofty side of Hermon; that when He taught, it was by preference by the waves of Galilee, or walking through the corn-fields on the Sabbath, or on the summit of some grassy hill. We know that He had watched the tall 'lilies' arrayed more gloriously than Solomon; that He had marked the reed shaken in the wind, and the tender green of the first shoot of the fig-tree. We find his common teaching employed about the vineyard, and the wandering sheep, and the whitening corn, and the living well, the summer rain, and the wintry flood and storm. These and many more would not have been so often connected with his action and so ready on his lips had not He loved them well, and received their impressions vividly.

There are those to whom this thought may have no value, but to others the character of a perfect man wants this to make it beautiful, and beauty is of necessity an element of perfectness. It is true that the beauty which comes of this sensibility to Nature is not so profoundly tender and varied as that which comes of sensibility to human feeling, but it is calmer, perhaps more sublime: there is a glory of purity in it and of passion un-

deformed by evil, which makes the character which possesses it spiritual, not only with the spirituality which unites the spirit to its heavenly Father, but also with that which unites the imagination and the intellect to that part of the being of God which moves in and is revealed by the beauty and order of the universe.

To many men who have the poetic temperament, who see as much in a flower as in a book of genius, to exclude Christ from all this region is to separate them from Christianity; to find Him truly there is to hallow their love of Nature and their work therein, and to fill with a diviner air those moments of communion with the universe, when thought is not, but only inspiration.

But still higher in Him was that intense sensibility to human feeling, which made Him by instinct know, without the necessity of speech, the feelings of those He met.

This is the highest touch of beauty in a character. What is it which most charms us in a friend? It is that he can read the transient expression on our face and modify himself to suit the feeling we are ourselves but half conscious of possessing; it is that he knows when to be silent and when to speak; it is that he never mistakes, but sees us true when all the world is wrong about us; it is that he can distinguish the cynicism of tenderness from that of malice, and believe our love though we choose to mask our heart.

Such a friend has not only power of character but beauty of character. Who is it who is most haunted in society, around whom people collect as around a perfect picture? It is that man or woman who, from sensi-

bility to the feeling of others, knows how to develope in the noblest way each personality, whose mediating charity and sympathy bring into musical accord the several characters of their society, till, all having been lured to do what each can do best, they learn to work happily and live happily together.

This is another element of the beautiful character, and the root of its beauty is sensibility which worketh by love, and delights in its own power.

He saw Nathanael in the early days coming to Him from the garden and the fig-tree. He looked upon the simple and earnest face, and recognised the long effort of the man to be true. In a moment He frankly granted the meed of praise: 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.' A few words more, in which Christ went home to the secret trials of the man, and Nathanael was his for ever.

He met Peter in the morning light, and seeing through all the surface impetuosity of his character deep into the strength of his nature, called him Cephas, the man of rock, on whose powerful character the infant Church should be built. And Peter, catching inspiration from the word, saw a new life opening before him and began to believe in his own power; too much at first and for some years, till, in the hour of bitter failure, the transient force of self-confidence melted away before the last look of his Master, and the diviner strength which flows from penitence fulfilled the prediction of Christ.

When the woman who was a sinner knelt at his sacred feet and wept, Christ felt the thrill of con-

tempt which ran from guest to guest, and felt how bitterly it smote upon the woman's soul. He turned, and in an exquisite reproof rebuked the scorn, shamed the scorners, and redeemed the woman by recognition of her tenderness. Fallen, shamed, the exile of the world, she was born into a noble life when those words fell upon her ear: 'Her sins which are many are forgiven her, for she loved much.' When the malefactor on the cross appealed to Him, Christ saw at once that the fountain of a noble life had begun to flow. Without an instant's hesitation, He claimed its waters for Paradise. When the persistency of Thomas refused to believe without a sign, another teacher might have been angry. Christ penetrated to the inner honesty which prompted the scepticism and vouchsafed a reply of love. It struck home, and the Apostle's heart was broken into adoration. It was the same with bodies of men as with men. He wove into one instrument of work the various characters of the Apostles, making them harmonise with and understand each other. How did He hold together those vast multitudes day by day? By feeling their hearts within his own. How did He shame and confute his enemies? By an instinct of their objections and their whispers, so that He replied to their thoughts before they were spoken. Men, women, and children, all who were natural, unconventional, simple in love, and powerful in faith, ran to Him as a child to its mother. They felt the beauty of character which was born of sensibility to human feeling and spiritual wants, and they were bound to Him for ever.

This, then, is the Founder of a religion for man, a religion not only of the inner and mystical life of the spirit, but also a religion of feeling and imagination; which talks not only of sin, and suffering, and redemption, but which has entered, in its Author's life, into those finer touches of sense, and those remoter haunts of imagination which are at once the ministrants and the children of a high culture; which, taking its impulse from the natural instinct of Christ to penetrate by feeling into the lives and hearts of men and catch their fleeting impressions, and to do this for all men—so that He saw the beautiful and the strange in men who seemed to others commonplace—has enabled us, using his instrument of love, to grow ourselves beautiful in character from continual discovery and vision of the beautiful in others; till gaining his power of seeing in nature the ever-changing forms of one Divine beauty, and of seeing in man, beneath all evil, the unalterable traits of that image of the heavenly which Christ revealed, we grow up into somewhat of his loveliness of character, and begin to look forward with a strange, new exultation to the fulfilment of that ancient promise: 'Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty.'

THE BEAUTY OF CHRIST'S CHARACTER.

'Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty.'—Isaiah xxxiii. 17.

THERE is a difference between the worthiness and the beauty of a character. A man's acts and thoughts may have worth to kindle respect, but not to touch the imagination with that peculiar pleasure which is derived from the reception of beauty. They are like the reading of honourable prose; whereas the same acts and thoughts by a character which is beautiful as well as worthy, are like the reading of noble poetry. We continue to read the character of Christ to-day, not for its worth especially, but distinctly for the poetic beauty which adorns its worth.

The first of its beautiful elements we found to be sensibility, and we described how intense it was with regard to impressions received from nature and from man. But we especially said that this sensibility was necessarily active in a perfect character. It seeks, and that with passion, to clothe and to realise itself in an outward form. We discussed it in itself last Sunday. Our object to-day will be to investigate it in action in the words and deeds of Christ. A certain amount of repetition of thought will naturally mark what we have

to say, but the thoughts will be repeated from a new point of view and in a new form.

Sensibility to nature and man, in action, is sympathy with nature and man, and it is plain that unless the former passes into and completes itself in the latter, it soon ceases to be an element of beauty in character. For nothing is really beautiful which does not grow, or change, or give us the impression of vital energy either within itself or employed upon it. This is doubly true when the beauty spoken of is not physical beauty, but belonging to a living character like that of Christ.

First, then, we have to trace, as delicately and as reverently as we can, how the sensibility of Christ to the beauty of nature became active as sympathy with nature.

There are many who possess the former, but who never employ either intellect or imagination on the impressions which they receive through its means. Remaining passive, they permit the tide of this world's beauty to flow in and flow out again of their mind without the exercise of any thought upon it. We feel that that sort of passive unintelligent reception is uglier in a character than the absence of any sensibility at all. For we are made conscious of a moral wrong done by these persons to their own character. They might have made so much of their native power of receptiveness; they have done nothing with it. It is true that Wordsworth, in whom this sensibility was very great, speaks of a 'wise passiveness,' and of surrendering ourselves at times to those lessons of the

universe which come of themselves, without our seeking. But this is only at times. No man was ever more active than Wordsworth about the impressions derived from his sensibility to natural beauty. He gave himself up to them, but it was that they might change, as they flowed in, the whole landscape of his soul; that his imagination might, under their influence, become continually active in new directions of thought and feeling. And nothing is more remarkable in Wordsworth, whose poems are the record of his life, than the way in which impressions, passively received, became vital and creative forces in him, when he added to them the force of his own imagination. So great was this, that we might almost say that at every hour of his daily walk among the hills, he became a new-created man, was different in character from that which he had been the previous hour. His sensibility to nature translated itself into so passionate a sympathy with nature, that he felt towards wood and hill and stream as he would towards persons whom he loved. The result was that he became creative; each feeling took form as a poem.

The beauty of all this in a character is the impression of life and change it gives, united to the impression of human power in noble intellectual action.

Now, obscure as are the hints we possess with regard to the sensibility of Christ to impressions received from nature, yet we have enough recorded to show us that the same activity of sensibility which belongs to the poetic nature belonged to Him.

You remember that passage, when, as He walked

silently along, He suddenly lifted up his eyes and saw the fields whitening already to harvest. He received the impression in a passive mood. It changed the whole current of his thoughts, and the whole state of his soul. Immediately thought seized on the change worked within Him by the impression and expressed it in words. It marks a beautiful character to be so rapidly and delicately impressed, but the beauty of the character becomes vital beauty when the man, through utter sympathy with and love of what he feels, becomes himself creative of new thought.

Again: the poet, in hours when he is not in the passive mood, makes his sensibility active through the combining, modifying, and life-conferring work of the imagination. The impressions received are contrasted with one another, or composed into unity, or shaped into a vital form. But though they suffer these changes, and are made into the form of a poem, which contains, but is different from, the impressions, the poem itself does not become out of harmony with the natural beauty which suggested it. On the contrary, it has a reflex action on the impressions which caused it, and gives them deeper meaning; and it enables us to penetrate below the surface-beauty of the world, and to find there a spiritual loveliness. It gets into the inner being of nature and explains it. The poet's sensibility to nature becomes active as personal sympathy with the living soul of nature.

This also we find in the character of Christ. Take a single instance. In an active mood—for He was teaching—He saw a corn-field by the shore of the lake,

and a number of images streamed into his mind. He looked on the whole career of the corn-field—the sowing of the seed, the beaten path through the midst, the seed downtrodden by the passengers and gathered up by the birds, the rich harvest in the good soil, the blades of wheat choked by the rough thicket at the edge, and towards the hill-slope the patches of withered corn over the shelving rock, where the earth lay loose and thin.

In a moment all the impressions were taken up by the imagination, and combined into the parable of the sower. They were carried into the spiritual world. They were shaped into a picture of human life, with its temptations, and its struggles, and its end.

They were gathered up into a poem, which gave back to nature the impressions received, in a new form, which clothed the natural scene with new beauty, and went below its surface into its hidden meaning.

This could only be done by sensibility to nature becoming sympathy with that inward being of nature which is the image of the Thought of God. And, indeed, we meet again and again in his teaching, touches of thought which make us feel that, to the Saviour, all the world was not dead but a living thing, informed and penetrated by God. Again and again, the kingdom of God is spoken of as symbolised by the growth of the tree, by the development of the seed, by the fermentation of the leaven; the character of God, by the shining of the sun and the falling of the rain upon evil and good alike; the dealings of God with man, by the dealings of the gardener with the fig-tree,

of the shepherd with the sheep; the spiritual union of His people with Himself, by the union of the vine-branch with the vine, by the assimilation of bread and wine with the body for strength and comfort. Everywhere it is the perfection of sensibility to natural impressions in its activity as sympathy with the being of nature. Everywhere, as we read, we become conscious of the beauty of the character which translated, by its own Divine vitality, mere sensibility into sensibility as sympathy, mere feeling into living thought.

Once more, on this subject. Sensibility to beautiful natural impressions, when it is inactive, does not distinguish clearly between these impressions. It has no distinctiveness in its praise; it has only one feeling for all the different aspects of the world. As such, it at once becomes inert, degraded, an element of ugliness in a character. We all know how wearisome is his enthusiasm who parades the same stock of phrases, who knows not when to give the praise of silence, whose feelings are the same, whether he look on a peaceful landscape or on an Alpine valley, who has the same undiscerning delight in the beauty of a rose or the beauty of a violet. This is sensibility degraded by laziness into a deformity in a character. We turn away displeased and pained.

The true sensibility becoming sympathy, sympathises with the distinct nature of each thing it feels, divides each thing from all the rest, gives to each a different praise, feels for each a different feeling, and harmonises itself with the tone of each impression. This is one of the highest qualities of the poet. It is

to be found in the character of Christ, and it gives to it a peculiar and delicate beauty.

We find it suggested in the perfect appositeness of the illustrations He drew from nature to the thoughts He desires to illustrate. 'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.' Can anything be more exquisite than that?—the lilies being not our lilies of the valley, but the tall crimson flowers which round about Gennesareth still raise their heads like kings in splendour.

But this distinctiveness appears still more in the choice of places for certain moods of mind. When the lonely struggle of the temptation had to be wrought out, He went into the wilderness. For communion with his Father, when He was weary of heart, He chose the hill-top in its silence beneath the stars; for transfiguration, Hermon, when the glory of the setting sun poured a flood of gold into its valleys; for the agony, Gethsemane, with olives dark in the moon, and the rough patter of Kedron over its stony bed. Think of these things. They speak of acute sensibility in vital activity; they give us an impression of delicate beauty of character.

I have already spoken of this interest of Christ's in natural beauty as having a real practical bearing upon our life. But there is something more to say. In it, Christ is seen as the Master and source of natural religion. In his parables, in his wanderings over hill and plain, in the grove and by the lake, He gathers

up and claims as Divine, all those dim regrets and vague ideals, those thoughts which lie too deep for tears, those moments of ecstacy with nature, when imagination transfigures life; all that world of poetry, music, and art, which the sense of natural beauty stirs in the heart of man, and creates by the hand of man. And in this He recognises as his own the natural religion of to-day, and bids us believe in its beauty and add it to the spiritual.

Never, men say, was faith weaker than now: never they own, was the poetic recognition of the beauty and mystery of the world greater than now. Never, certainly, did the imaginative sense of the forms of external nature more tell upon the moral temper of mankind than now. The study of art, the love of music, the mere sight of the grander scenery of the world, to see which we make an exodus every year, are moral agencies which are influencing lives around us, as really, and in many cases more widely, than the directly religious teaching we can give. There are those who condemn these things as leading men away from the spiritual world. They have forgotten the teaching of Christ. If all be true which we have now said, Christ felt these modern feelings, and led men to God through nature and its works. And it may be that in this modern tendency, the spirit of Christ is teaching now as of old; that from the schools of theology and the pulpits of our synagogues He is leading forth the crowd into the fields and the wilderness and by the lake, that He may teach them there in parables to know and see the King in his beauty.

Secondly, if it be true that sensibility to natural impressions ceases to be a beautiful thing in a character, unless it become active through sympathy, it is still more plainly true of sensibility to human feeling. It is a beautiful thing to be sensible to noble conduct, to feel inspired by courage in another, to rejoice in truth when truth dies for righteousness' sake, to thrill with compassion for sorrow. But if these feelings never realise themselves in practical sympathy, we instinctively feel that they are only another form of selfishness, that men encourage them for the excitement they afford them, not for the good they urge them to do to others. They connect themselves in our mind with the slothfulness which refuses to put them into work, and the connection of selfishness and sloth with anything takes from it all vital beauty.

It was not so with Christ. His extraordinary sensibility to human feeling became operative at once as sympathy, was at once translated into action. I need scarcely seek for examples of this. It is in all our remembrance how his tenderness stayed upon the wayside to satisfy the mother's heart and to bless the children; how his compassion felt in itself the weariness of the multitude and gave it rest and food. We remember how swift was the love which, touched by the widow's weeping, stopped the bier and restored to his mother's arms the son; how strange that passion of tears at the grave of Lazarus, which wept because those He loved were weeping even at the moment when He was about to give back the lost; how discriminating the sympathy which gave to Martha and

to Mary their several meed of praise; how unspeakable in beauty that translation into words of the sorrow of the mother and the Apostle, which He felt within Himself, and to both phases of which, in utter forgetfulness of his own pain, He spoke distinctively: 'Woman, behold thy son!' Friend, 'behold thy mother!' And how delicate and yet what a home-thrust to the shame and love of Peter, how actively creative in its effects upon the Apostle's character, was that threefold question, 'Lovest thou me?' All was felt which human feeling felt, and then all was sympathised with actively, till at last, upon the cross, all the sorrows of the world were taken in to Himself and borne in the activity of voluntary suffering, that they might be for ever, in the end, lifted off the heart of mankind. It is there, when intense sensibility to the want, and woe, and sin of men had led Him to absolute self-sacrifice through sympathy—there, in that bowed head and broken Manhood —that we realise at last, in the radiance of love which eye hath not seen, the King in his perfect beauty.

This, then, is loveliness of character for you and me. Remember, we have no right to boast of our sensibility to the feelings of others; nay, it is hateful in us, till we lift it into the beauty of sympathising action.

One word more upon this sympathy. It was given to all the world; but it was not given in a like manner to all, nor at all times. There is a certain unpleasantness in undiscriminating sympathy, which possesses nothing special nor any moments of reserve. Such a character is without loveliness; we find no mystery in it to charm and lure; we have no sense of

depths which we should delight to penetrate; we know all, and having known all, pass on by an irresistible necessity, and leave that friend behind. He is superficial—in one word, he wants humanity.

Plainly, the sympathy of Christ did not want this element of beauty. He had, in its fitting place, the Teutonic quality of reserve. He shrank from over-publicity; He kept his secret heart for those dearest to Him, though his love went over the world. He gave closer sympathy and affection to three among his disciples than to the others. He gave more tenderness to Mary than to Martha. Without any favouritism, He still, as a personal friend, individualised his affection. He felt the necessity at times for even deeper reserve. When the multitude oppressed Him, He went away with his disciples to the desert; when his disciples could not comfort Him, the lonely man went apart to speak only with his Father. There often hung round his actions and his teaching an indefiniteness, necessitated by the vast range of his thought, and by the profound way in which He felt the problems of life and spoke their explanation, which threw around Him, and still throws around Him to us, that beauty which lies in mystery, when it is a mystery which we know by experience is worth our further search. Still we feel that He has many things to say to us and to the world which we cannot bear now. Still He speaks to us in proverbs and in parables. Still the imagination, the feeling, and the intellect of man have an endless field of work in his character and his teaching. Still we are lured by the beauty of His life to discover in it new beauty. His character possesses the loveliness which

belongs to reserve, to distinctiveness of love, to the mystery which comes from depth of nature and infinity of thought.

Therefore remember, that Christ has sanctified what is good in that quality we call reserve. Do not be too anxious to give away yourself, to wear your heart upon your sleeve. It is not only unwise, it is wrong to make your secret soul common property. For you bring the delicate things of the heart into contempt by exposing them to those who cannot understand them. If you throw pearls before swine, they will turn again and rend you.

Nor, again, should you claim too much openness, as a duty due to you, from your child, your friend, your wife, or your husband. Much of the charm of life is ruined by exacting demands of confidence. Respect the natural modesty of the soul; its more delicate flowers of feeling close their petals when they are touched too rudely. Wait with curious love—with eager interest—for the time when, all being harmonious, the revelation will come of its own accord, undemanded. The expectation has its charm, for as long as life has something to learn, life is interesting; as long as a friend has something to give, friendship is delightful. Those who wish to destroy all mystery in those they love, to have everything revealed, are unconsciously killing their own happiness. It is much to be with those who have many things to say to us which we cannot bear now. It is much to live with those who sometimes speak to us in parables—if we love them. Love needs some indefiniteness in order to keep its charm. Respect,

which saves love from the familiarity which degrades it, is kept vivid when we feel that there is a mystery in those we love which comes of depth of character.

Remember that in violating your own reserve, or that of another, you destroy that sensitiveness of character which makes so much of the beauty of character; and beauty of character is not so common as not to make it a cruel thing to spoil it.

Again, it is pleasant to think that Christ sanctified distinctiveness in friendship and love. No character can be beautiful, though it may be excellent, which can give the same amount of affection to all alike. It argues a want of delicacy, and, worse still, a want of individuality in the character, which at once negative its beauty. There are some who think that they should strive to bestow equal love on all, and who, on religious grounds, avoid particular friendships. It was not Christ's way, and it ends badly. They only succeed in spoiling their power of loving and power of sympathy. These are gained and strengthened by strongly felt and special love for a few. If you want to give love and sympathy to all, have profound love for particular persons; for you cannot gain the power of loving otherwise than in a natural manner, and it is unnatural to love all alike. But love, easily going forth to those whom you find it easy to love, learns to grow deep and to double its power—and then spreads abroad like a stream which is most impetuous at its fountains. Christ did not love the world less, but more, because He had peculiar personal affections, and it is to that distinctiveness of love we turn when we would realise the

beauty of his love as distinguished from the majesty of his love. We are astonished when we think of the universality of his tenderness—but we have little comfort from it. Our soul longs for some personal contact with Him. Then it is that the speciality of his love for some comes home to us, and we know that He can give us a distinct sympathy fitted for our character. His love is universal, for all the race; it is particular, to each one of the race. Majesty of character meets in this with beauty of character.

Finally, encourage in yourselves the sensibilities of life. No man is born quite without the power of receiving impressions from nature, and from human nature, though there are many who have brought death by neglect upon their native power. To encourage these sensibilities is not to fall into sentimental indulgence of feeling, for you can only encourage and increase them by active exercise of imagination and intellect; by active expression of them in the support and comfort of men. It is those who take no real pains with their sensibilities, who fall into mere sentiment.

Open your heart to receive the teaching of nature; not too passively, lest you lose your individuality, but letting all your powers freely play upon the lessons she brings to you; nor yet assuming too much activity of intellect upon what you receive from her, lest you lose the humility of receptiveness.

Open your heart to receive the teaching which comes to you from human nature. Feeling received and feeling given back will educate you into a strange likeness to Christ. You will learn, like Christ, to find your

religion in human life. Listen lowly to the simple common word which is very nigh to us; for in the common details, accidents, affections of life—in the common relations of man to man, and of man to animals—in daily joys, and daily sorrows, that word speaks of the love of God to us, and of our childlike love to Him. But, both nature and man speak to us now, as Jesus spoke, in parables. He who has lost his sensitiveness cannot understand these parables.

THE BEAUTY OF CHRIST'S CHARACTER.

'Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty.'—Isaiah xxxiii. 17.

THERE are human lives which are poems, as there are lives which are prose. Some have the stately epic character, and we watch the course of their purification through the events of a nation's birth, or the growth of a religious idea. Others are the centre of so much of the doing and suffering of men, and move towards their fate with so deep an influence on the development of others, that we may well compare them to the evolution of a drama. Others stand for the most part alone, in a musical unity of life, complete in themselves, and lovely with noble feeling. These are the lyrical souls in the world.

There are other analogies, but let these suffice. They are the beautiful lives, lives which we may call artist work. Each has its own distinct charm; they give pleasure as poetry gives it, by the expression of the beautiful. Such a life, at its very highest range, was the life of Christ. We seek its poetry to-day, and we weave our thoughts of it round that profound phrase of Milton's, that poetry must be 'simple, sensuous, and passionate.'

Now if our comparison be true, the beautiful cha-

racter must also possess these qualities in its perfect development of reposefulness and activity. He must be *simple*, otherwise the world cannot be widely affected by his life and words. There are poets and teachers who speak only to a small class, touching on obscure or temporary phases of human thought. They die with the age which gave them birth. But the greater prophets speak the language of the common human heart, and yet have depths of feeling into which only a few can penetrate. For every superb genius is at once aristocrat and democrat. The common people hear him gladly, and yet to few it is given to know his mysteries.

Again, he must be not only simple, but also *sensuous*; that is, intensely sensitive to impressions derived through the senses, and continually receiving them. For it is from the infinite variety of these impressions, and the ceaseless work of his imagination upon them, that his character derives the beauty of changefulness—changefulness, however, which is subject to an inner unity. The soul of such a man is beautiful, for out of the impulse of these impressions a multitude of feelings, each having almost imperceptible shades of difference, are born within him, so that he can allot to each thing its distinctive tone, and to each person a distinctive sympathy, till at last, his inner life becomes like that wonderful world imagined by one of our poets:

> Where do inhabit
> The shadows of all forms which think and live.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Dreams and the light imaginings of men,
> And all that faith creates and love desires.

And more than he imagined—the types of all natural forms and perfect landscapes, the visions which come to men upon the solitary hills; the things which haunt 'thought's wildernesses;' the air-born, filmy children of the senses when married to imagination.

Passionate also he must be, for all this received beauty and feeling remain unshared and unexpressed unless they be so passionately felt as to ensure expression. There is beauty in the character which feels with passion but cannot speak. The pure beauty of feeling passes into the face; there are subtile motions of eyelid and lip which are more than many poems; there are acts in which whole books, whole lives, are concentrated. It is passion in silent expression, and within its sphere the range and forms of beauty are immeasurable, from the almost imperceptible change within the smile which records a flying cloud of transient joy or pain, to the voiceless death in which a great man's sacrifice ennobles and redeems a nation.

But when the power of speech accompanies the expression of action, when he who acts passionately can also strike into words the meaning of his passion and the spirit of his act, and send it down for ever to thrill and inspire mankind; then, if the passion which move him be divinely human and naturally pure, the crown of the beauty of genius has been reached.

When we talk of passionate poetry we mean too often that which speaks only of the passion of love. This is not what Milton meant by his word. He meant that the poetry was so intense on every subject it treated, that one knew instinctively, as one read, that

the poet had lost in his enthusiasm of expression all thought of self. Poetry intense on one subject and not on all, was inferior work; it was liable to become overstrained on that one subject, and in doing so it lost the note of beauty. This has been more or less the case with many of our so-called passionate poets. It provokes a smile that Byron—who, with all his colossal power, was always looking round to see how the world was affected by his poetry, and whose painful personality is intruded into his most vivid descriptions of love and nature—should be called the poet of passion, and Wordsworth the poet of calm. Wordsworth did not write much of the passion of false love, nor of the passion of true love between youth and maiden; but no passion is at a whiter heat than his when he writes of a mother's love to a child, or of a husband to a wife, and we never hear an unmanly note of self-consciousness. And when his soul was stirred with the greater passions of humanity—love of liberty, sympathy with a great nation passing through a storm of revolution, deep sorrow for the fall of a people from a glorious past, the aspiration of the heart of mankind to the Infinite, the majesty of knowledge and the eternity of his own art—he rises to a height of majestic passion, his words have the stately step of gods—they burn like the bush on Sinai, white, but unconsumed.

Still greater was his passion when he lost himself in nature. Only one other English poet surpassed him in this, and he, in surpassing him, drifted into a frequent extravagance, which leads us back to Wordsworth in the end, as the king of those who have grasped nature

closely and expressed her life intensely. For he had sobriety in the centre of passion. His sense of fitness, his sense of simplicity, his sense of temperance as the cestus of beauty, ruled his most passionate moods with nature.

Nor did his temperance make his passion less, but more. It prevented it from losing itself in too rapid a flame. It intensified it by pressure, while it held its unused force so sternly under command that it could be directed at once with full power upon any point of a subject, and modified so as to give the just amount of power to each point.

By this calmness in the midst of passion, the highest beauty of art is reached, and the greatest and noblest pleasure given.

Now these which are the qualities of beautiful poetry are the qualities also of the beautiful character, and belong to human nature in its ideal. They ought, therefore, to have belonged to Him in whom we believe that human nature reached not only its highest majesty but its highest beauty.

Take, then, the first—*simplicity*. It is not of the simplicity of Christ's teaching that I speak, for to that I have alluded already, but of the quality in his character which corresponds to that which we call simplicity in poetry. That which is simplicity in art is purity in a perfect character.

Now the beauty of Christ's purity was first in this, that those who saw it, saw in it the glory of moral victory.

We talk of the beauty of innocence in a child. That

was not the beauty of Christ's purity. Exquisite as it is, we know that it is fleeting, and the sense of its transiency stains our pleasure. Some speak of the spiritual beauty which belongs to the untempted life of one who has never known the world, which shines upon the faces of those saints whom Angelico conceived in his cloistered solitude. Neither was that the beauty of Christ's purity.

The purity of Christ was purity which had been subject to the storm, which had known evil and overcome it, which had passed through the dusty ways of men, and received no speck upon its white robes. A tempest of trial had only driven it, like the snow on Alpine summits, into more dazzling spotlessness. It was beautiful with its own beauty; it was still more beautiful, in that it stirred in men the sensation of moral power, of sustained activity of soul.

And from this purity, so tried and so victorious, arose two other elements of moral beauty, perfect justice and perfect mercy. Innocence cannot be just. It does not know good, it does not know evil: how can it judge without knowledge? It would *fling* reward or punishment to those brought before it, without knowing whether the reward would be reward, or the punishment punishment, to the persons on whom they were bestowed. It could never apportion mercy, or apportion justice, to different degrees of penitence or sin. There is nothing uglier than recklessness, and recklessness is the characteristic of the judgments of innocence.

Nor is the untempted saint fit to judge. He does not know the force of temptation. He is severe and cruel

when he seeks to be just; he can make no allowances; his mercy he calls weakness; he insists on too much penitence, more than the sinner can bear; he drives, by the very force of rigid goodness, men into despair.

But Christ is able to be just and yet merciful, because He is entirely pure. Having known evil and subdued it, He judges from perfect knowledge. He suffered, being tempted, therefore He is merciful, knowing the force of temptation; He met and realised in battle the root principles of evil, therefore his justice is stern and unrelenting when He sees these principles ruling the lives of men. So it was that He had no words of pity for the hypocrite, the root of whose life was falsehood: the only thing which could save the Pharisee was unrelenting condemnation. So it was that He had mercy on the publican whose heart He saw to be broken with penitence, and on the woman who had been overtaken in a fault. In all the acts of the Saviour there is no act and no words so beautiful—beautiful for their daring, for their magnificent trust in human nature, for their magnificent independence of the opinion of men, for their perfect marriage of justice and mercy—as the act and the words of Christ to the woman taken in adultery: 'Woman, hath no man condemned thee?' 'No man, Lord.' 'Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.' It was the judgment of perfect purity.

This was not, as some have put it, a divine incapacity for seeing evil; it was a divine capacity for seeing good through evil. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God'—not only God as He is in His perfect being, not only God in nature, but also God in man.

It was this power which Christ possessed as the result of purity. Wherever there was a shred of good, a spark of the Divine in the lost and sinful, Christ saw it by the instinct of his purity. He discovered it and drew it forth, as a magnet would draw from a heap of chaff one needle-point of steel. There is no loveliness in a character greater than this, and it stamps the whole of the Saviour's life. If you would win it, be pure in heart.

(2.) The second element of beauty in art was sensuousness. That word in Milton's sense of it was entirely noble in meaning. Of its representative in a character I have already spoken in speaking of the sensibility of the character of the Saviour to impressions received from nature and from man. But I may add this, that as the poet produces beautiful work out of the multitudinous world of images of things and feelings which he has received, so the exquisiteness of the parables and of the words of Christ, both in form and expression, was the direct result of the knowledge He had gained from this quality of sensibility. A world of natural images dwelt within Him; a world of varied human feelings, received from all the men and women whom He had met, dwelt within Him also. The parables unite these two worlds in expression. They make nature reflect man, and man receive from nature. They make all the doings of nature explain the life of man; they teach the life of man to find teaching and comfort in the life of nature. They have even a deeper thought than this—they make us feel that God Himself has harmonised us to our habitation;

that the mind of man is fitted to the external world, and the external world to the mind; and that through the wedlock of the intellect and the spirit of man, in love and holy passion,* to the universe, as well as through reverence to Him who established this harmony between us and nature, we reach, whether in science or in art, our noblest intellectual height; and in religion, so far as natural religion is concerned, our noblest spiritual life.

He who walks this world, conscious of that inner harmony between himself and the universe of which the parables are the expression, walks in the midst of an atmosphere of beauty. 'The living presence of the earth' waits upon his steps, and her presence is of divine loveliness, for it is the form of God's idea. Everything speaks to him. He sees himself in all he sees; but it is himself as he ought to be, and the vision is inspiring, not degrading. The common air he breathes, the sunshine and the rain, the growth of plants, the sea which shimmers and the clouds which move in light, speak parables to him, of which God as a Father and Man as a child are the interpretation; they tell him that in common life he may find his first, perhaps his best religion; that

> The primal duties shine aloft—like stars;
> The charities which soothe, and heal, and bless,
> Are scattered at the feet of men like flowers.

To him who has this secret law of harmony, the universe imparts 'authentic tidings of invisible things,'

* See Preface to the *Excursion*.

the beauty of harmonious variety, the beauty of eternal power, the beauty of activity held in the calm of order. He lives in this beauty, and he grows beautiful by communion with it; he lives in the region of the parables of Christ.

(3.) The third element of great poetry is passion. We may transfer it directly to a character as an element of beauty. It is best defined as the power of intense feeling capable of perfect expression. It is the source of the beauty of energy and in temperance is its lasting charm.

It was intense feeling of the weakness and sin of man, and intense joy in his Father's power to redeem, which produced the story of the 'Prodigal Son,' where every word is on fire with tender passion. See how it comes home, even now, to men; see how its profound humanity has made it universal!

'Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' How that goes home to the deepest want of the race; how deep the passion which generalised that want into a single sentence; how intense, yet how pathetic—pathetic because intense—the expression of it; how noble the temperance which stayed at the single sentence and felt that it was enough.

And if you seek for the silent passion of action, we find it in many forms in his life. They speak of intensity of feeling at once realising itself—from the driven flight into the wilderness to the vital rush of his inward glory into the transfigured expression of his form upon the side of Hermon; from the moment

when He stood on the great stairs of the Temple, crying, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink,' to the hour when He wept over the guilt and ruin of his nation; from the awfulness of the supreme agony in the garden to the last cry of triumph for a world redeemed which rose out of the abyss of death upon the cross. In all it was passion in its noblest forms and in the intensest expression. It is a beauty of character which passes into and assumes the diadem of sublimity.

All this gives the impression of a nature inspired by a stream of ever-flowing energy—of a nature all whose powers were in vital action. It is this easy, natural activity, this instantaneousness in the marriage of the thought to the act, which is another element of beauty, for it suggests, not only passion, but the harmony of passions and absolute healthiness of soul. In the midst of a world which gives a false glory to violent passion and likes to dwell on morbid passion in its literature, it is delightful to turn to the perfectly active yet perfectly healthy soul of Christ; its intensity of feeling subdued to do his work, so that He could both act and speak to the point at once.

Again and again in the gospel story we are made to feel this promptitude and keenness of Christ.

The right thing is always done at the right time, not a moment too late or too early. We are conscious of the fire of enthusiasm, but we never find hurry; there is no divergence from the plan of life under unregulated impulse; the act is never overstrained.

The right thing also is said at the right time, and

said with exquisite knowledge of the less or more which might have spoiled its influence. There is no irritating repetition of reproof; one sharp stern phrase is spoken and no more: 'Get thee behind me, adversary;' 'Ye know not what spirit ye are of'—and then silence.

The same may be said of his praise. There is no flattery; the central point worthy of praise in the character, often a quite unexpected point, is seized on at once and brought into prominence. 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile;' 'I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel;' 'She loved much;'—in all, the one clear sentence which revealed the man to himself, and which will remain, because of its absolute fitness, as his central attribute in our memory.

This is the beauty of energy, the child of passion, in a nature perfectly at harmony through the exercise of temperance.

But Christ has been accused of intemperance, especially in his severe treatment of the Pharisees. If this be true, perfect beauty of character is gone, for temperance, inasmuch as it keeps all the powers of the soul from extravagance, 'is the girdle of beauty.' But I have never been impressed with the justice of this objection. I can conceive nothing more worthy of indignation than Pharisaism. In all its forms it is hateful; and not only Christ, but every teacher, Pagan or Christian, in proportion as he loved truth, mercy, and righteousness, has denounced it as the worst of evils. The more true, and pure, and human a man was, the more indignation would he feel against it, and it was because Christ was truer, purer, and more

human than others, that He spoke more strongly than others.

But were his expressions used in anger, rather than in indignation? If so, however deserved, they were intemperate. They do not wear that aspect. In anger, reason has not time to operate; words rush almost unwittingly to the lips. Hence, they are incoherent; they are unjust; they want the mark of deliberate choice; they run on in unmeaning declamation; they do not hit the point, they do not sting. But indignation, being a noble and divine quality, is led by reason and is the servant of justice. It waits before it speaks. Its denunciation is calm, deliberate, and full; the words are chosen so as to hit the point and the evil hard, and in the centre; they are weighed so as to be scrupulously just. They bear the stamp of thought, and they do their work, making the heart on which they fall writhe with shame and pain. A certain amount of fine irony often goes with this indignation, for there is calm at its root, and irony is the child, in such matters, of indignation and calm.

Now, Christ's words to the Pharisees have all the marks of indignation and none of the marks of anger. I cannot conceive beauty of character without indignation at evil. Purity implies it, and indignation, by its very essence, is restrained to strict justice, laying on its scourge exactly with the requisite severity and in the requisite place. There was passion in the words of Christ, but it was divine passion, under the restraint of law. It did not sin against temperance; nay, it derived its force from temperance.

Lastly, passion and energy, limited by temperance, imply repose of character. As we cannot attribute repose to that which has not the capability of energy, so that energy is not noble energy, nor is it directed by temperance in the midst of its passion, unless it be capable of profound calm. I will even go further, and say that all noble moral energy roots itself in moral calm. Now, as in all art, so also in all human character, we demand, as in one the appearance, so also in the other the reality of repose, as a primary element of beauty. All restlessness—a very different thing from vital energy—is ugly, having no goal, being full of vain effort. Activity in repose, calm in the heart of passion, these things are of the essence of beauty.

And in Him in whom we have found the King in his beauty this peacefulness was profound. His activity grew out of his deep quietude of trust in his Father's will. It mattered little to Him that the turbulence of parties surrounded Him and the wild mob of Jerusalem cried for his death. He passed on in the calm of one to whom duty was all, to finish the work given Him to do; content quietly to live or quietly to die, unalarmed, and unimpatient, for his Father's law was his law, and his life and death were hidden in the stillness of God's will; consistent in self-rule, because He had escaped from self into union with the perfect good; satisfied to suffer, for He reposed upon the promise and believed in the love of his Father. This is the final touch of beauty, which gathers into itself, and harmonises, all the others; and hence no words are so beautiful as those in which, having perfect rest Himself, He bestows

it as his dying legacy on men: 'Peace I leave with you, peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you;' and repeats it as his resurrection gift: 'Peace be unto you.'

Let us part with this supreme conception in our hearts. In the midst of the fevered activity and unrestrained passion of our life in this great city, seek for a centre of calm. Find it where Christ found it, in humble trust in a Father's love; find it in the calm which comes of duty accepted as the law of life, duty to your heavenly Father, duty to your brother-men. Find it in resolute obedience; so that the spirit of that solemn inscription over the dead at Thermopylæ may be true of you: 'Stranger, tell the Lacedæmonians that we lie here in obedience to their orders.' Find it by realising in yourself, through union with Christ's spirit and Christ's life, that deep calm of his which translated noble passions into noble energy, and moved his energy forwards within the temperate sphere of law. So will you see and reflect in character the King in his beauty. For all moral loveliness, and all spiritual, lies in knowing what He meant when He said: 'Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

PRAYER AND NATURAL LAW.

'Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.'—James iv. 3.

Prayer is in its plainest meaning a petition addressed to God. We desire Him to give us some blessing, to help us in some difficulty, or to relieve us from some pain. But this meaning, when brought face to face with the conception of the absolute, or to the test of modern scientific knowledge, is open to a series of objections. To escape from these objections other meanings have been given to prayer. It has been said, that to labour is to pray: it has been said that to have communion with God, and to meditate on Him, is to pray: it has been said, that aspiration is prayer. But however true these definitions may be, they are not, even taking them all together, an adequate definition, as long as they omit or place in the background the idea of petition. Nor do we avoid the metaphysical and scientific difficulties when we ignore petition as being of the essence of prayer. It is and will always remain its greatest part.

It is wiser, then, if we would retain prayer as an intellectual conception and not discredit it to ourselves in the spiritual world, to look its difficulties in

the face. What are these? Those which beset it in the spiritual and moral worlds arise from our idea of the unchangeability of God. In theology and metaphysics the further one gets from an idolatrous and superstitious idea of God, the more one conceives of Him as unable to alter His principles of action without changing His own nature. Suppose for a moment such a change in God, and the whole spiritual world would fall to pieces; nay, more, He would then—and the phrase is not irreverent for it is founded on His own self-revelation—destroy Himself.

The difficulties which beset prayer as petition, in connection with God as the Lord of the spiritual and moral world, have been discussed from generation to generation, and on the whole have been fairly answered. I leave these, then, behind, and take up the other side of the problem, for at present a new set of difficulties lie in our path, and occupy public interest. Prayer has come into contact with scientific discovery, and I express the problem in theological terms when I say that the unchangeability of God as Lord of the physical world is expressed in modern science by the law of the conservation of force, and that that law denies the power of prayer to alter any natural sequence.

The law itself is our statement of the fact that all the forces of the universe—light, heat and electricity, mechanical and chemical force, and the rest—are convertible into one another, and that the whole sum of them is a constant quantity. Force changes its form, but it is always the same, neither more nor less. No addition can be made to it, nothing can be taken

away from it. It can be infinitely converted, it cannot —unless we suppose the intervention of a miracle—be created. Every change in nature is then a matter of necessity. *Every change*;—that is the point which so many seem altogether unable to realise. There are certain changes which no one would dream of asking God to make. No one would be likely to pray that for the sake of relieving our pauper population by additional land, all the lakes in the country should be suddenly dried up; or that there should be two harvests in one year during a famine. This, men would say, would be miraculous, and we have no right to demand miracles of God. But, if the doctrine of the conservation of force be true, when we pray for the fall of a single shower of five minutes in length, or the change of the direction of the wind by a single point, or the evaporation of the faintest waft of cloud, by the independent will of God, we are asking for a miracle, and for as real and tremendous a disturbance of natural law as if we had asked the postponement of the rising of the sun, or the sudden removal of the moon from the sky. There is nothing little, or nothing great, in the motions of the universe. The demand for the creation of the smallest conceivable wave of new force, is as serious a demand as that for the creation of force equivalent to that which builds up a volcano in a night. In one case and the other we pray for a miracle, and for miracles equal in importance.

Now apply this to prayers for rain, and the like. A plague of rain, as it is called, falls upon England. We

offer up a prayer for its removal. It is worth while to ask ourselves what we are demanding.

The antecedents which produced a month's rain here took place some time ago in the equatorial and polar regions. The vapours taken up by the heat in the south equatorial regions were swept northwards by the upper current which descends bearing the waters in its bosom to become a surface current in the temperate zone. But in descending it meets the surface polar current which is now rising to become an upper current. The cold current condenses the vapour in the warm current, and rain falls. Now the amount of rain depends on the amount of water taken up as vapour in the seas south of the equator, and on the amount of condensing cold sent southwards from the polar seas; and the amount of heat which raised the vapour, and of cold which made it fall in rain depended on conditions which took place the year before, and those on conditions which took place the year before that, and so on backwards as far as thought can reach. The amount of rain which fell last week in England is to the millionth of an inch the exact result of a series of antecedents which not only took place some time ago about the equator and the pole, but which go back to the very beginning of things.

When we pray, then, that God would cause the rain to cease, we are asking one of two things—either that He would work a miracle for us, or, if we abjure that wish, that He would change, not circumstances as they exist at present, but all the natural phenomena which have existed on the globe, which is manifestly absurd.

When I think of these things, I find it absolutely impossible, without the grossest violation of my reason, to pray for or against rain, with a belief that God will answer my prayer. But you will say that God could do it if He liked. I do not say No to that, but I have no hesitation in saying, that I should not dare to ask Him to change the order of the universe at my desire. Once a man is acquainted with the processes of nature, and realises what the conservation of force means, and the results which would follow on the creation of the smallest possible amount of new force—results, the end of which he could never see, which little here might be stupendous elsewhere (for the fall of a miraculous shower here might necessitate an earthquake elsewhere and destroy 20,000 souls)—he would not dare to pray for five minutes' rain which was not naturally coming. And if he believed that God would grant his prayer, would he dare, ought he to dare, to meet the tremendous responsibilities involved? I could not ask God to create new force, even if I believed He would do so.

But there is another and more plausible objection to this rigid view that no sequence is or can be changed.

It may be urged, that as human will can modify the future results of things occurring now by changing the conditions under which those results will develope themselves—as, for example, I could change the future climate of a country by cutting down its forest—so it may be a spiritual law that the human will, acting on God's will through His appointed channel prayer, may cause God to interpose conditions which will change the mode

in which existing results are taking place. But the two members of the comparison are not equivalent. The modification of climate by man is the result of natural forces naturally used, through a period of many years. The modification of existing climatal phenomena—the heat which now prevails, for example—would be the result of a sudden interposition; it would not be natural but præternatural—it would be a miracle.

But it may be again replied: God could do it within the sphere of His own laws. He could introduce a higher law, or rearrange existing laws in a new combination, and so modify the fall of rain or banish the pestilence, and doing so without a violation of law, it would not be a miracle.

I answer, that the only true statement of a miracle which can be received, is that it is the result of a prearrangement by which the ordinary course of nature changes step, as it were, for a moment, by the will of God, for some great spiritual result. A miracle conceived of as a violation of order is an absolute impossibility. The alteration, therefore, of the course of the weather by God's rearrangement into a new combination of existing phenomena, *is* a miracle with this exception, that it is not accredited to the conscience of mankind by having as its end a great and obvious spiritual result.

In whatever way we look at the question, then, we pray for a miracle when we pray for the slightest change in the normal state of the universe.

Are such unknown miracles now continually performed at the call of individual men who do not see

beyond the present? Those who still believe that the miraculous is common in nature may pray with perfect consistency for rain, or fair weather, but they ought clearly to understand that they are asking God to perform miracles.

But those who cannot believe this, those who hold that a miracle is derogatory to the true idea of God, unless it is performed for great and ascertainable spiritual ends—ends which appeal to our reason and excuse the miracle—cannot pray for rain, or for fair weather, or for the sudden removal of a pestilence, without idolatry.

I do not say, I need scarcely assert this, that God could not perform continuous miracles at the instance of prayer, for I believe in a Personal Will which directs the universe towards an ultimate good; but I do say that it is to the last degree improbable that He would do so, and that if He did do so, we could have no security. Natural laws would be then at the mercy of every religious man. Some extremely good and spiritual persons are very imprudent in the practical work of the world. If their prayer about rain, fine weather, thunderstorms, pestilence, and other things were answered, and answered in accordance with a spiritual law, so that, in fact, by the hypothesis, *it must be answered*, what a state of utter confusion we should be in! We could not be certain of the sun rising at the proper time; we could not carry out with confidence any course of action founded on the assumption of the constancy of natural law.

I do not deny miracles. On the contrary, by deny-

ing the existence of continuous miraculous action, the cause of miracles is saved from utter overthrow. I maintain, given the idea of a personal king of nature, and men, that it is not only conceivable, but to be expected, that at certain great crises of human history miracles should take place, with the purpose of initiating a new spiritual era and for the salvation of the race of men, to redeem whom the sacrifice of the whole order of the material universe were a price as small as one human soul is inconceivably more valuable than the whole realm of that which we call matter.

But to spread these miracles over the whole of our human history is not only to destroy the very idea of a miracle, but to render the past miracles objects of the gravest doubt, by making the present supposed miracles absurd. I do not therefore believe that God interferes in any extraordinary manner with the usual course of nature. I do not believe that prayer does either bring or restrain rain: I do not think that it can check the cholera or divert the lightning. At the same time I believe that God could stay the rain and dismiss the pestilence, if it were His will, at the voice of prayer. He may do so for all I know, but it would make me miserable to think that it were so.

Directly, then, we ought not to pray for interference with the course of nature. But now another question comes in. Is it impossible to influence the harvest, or to avert a pestilence *indirectly*, through prayer? Has prayer a legitimate field of influence in connection with physical occurrences? I think it has, and in this way. God is the source of all thought in the brain and

of all true intuitions in imagination and spirit, as He is the source of all force in nature. He has made, we know, the force of nature a constant quantity. We are nowhere told that He has made the force of thought or the power of imagination constant. We are told that He is constantly giving grace to the spirit; we infer that He is constantly pouring upon men new thought and new power. Grace is given at the call of prayer; we may infer that, certain conditions being fulfilled, ideas are suggested by Him also to the brain, and noble thoughts to the heart, and energy bestowed upon the will. It is a mistake to suppose that His inspiring power has ceased to work, or that it is confined to spiritual things. It is by His inspiration that the artist paints, that the politician thinks aright for the country, that the poet creates, that the philosopher conjectures and then proves the laws of the universe. The influence of God's spirit upon man's spirit is infinite. The influence of God's thought upon man's thought I believe also to be unbounded. It is in this realm that prayer is of avail. Suppose that long-continued rain threatens England with a bad harvest. We ought not to pray that the rain should cease, but we may pray that God would give intelligence and activity to farmers that they may make the best of their opportunities; we may ask God to inspire the scientific chemists to invent such new modes of agriculture as will reduce the evils of heavy rain to the least possible quantity; or we might have prayed in times of Protection that God would inspire with tenfold force and energy the leaders of the Anti-Corn Law League. We

may pray, in short, either that men may change their relation to unchanging law, or that they may be led to pass measures, or to act in accordance with the laws of the universe, so as to range themselves, not against, but on the side of law. And I have no doubt that such prayer is as powerful as it is legitimate, and that God will answer it.

Take, again, the case of pestilence. It is asking amiss to pray that God will take it away from us suddenly, arbitrarily. As long as the causes which produce and aggravate it are in existence here, it *must* come, and all the prayers in the world will not keep it off. Nay, it would be infinitely the worse for us, if our prayers succeeded in keeping it away.

But to pray that God would inspire men of intelligence with keenness of observation and steadiness of investigation in order that they may discover the causes which awake and stimulate the pestilence; that He may inspire men of science with those happy thoughts which, like Jenner's, all but put an end to a disease; that He may stir a nation up to vigorous measures to destroy those conditions which give virulence to a pestilence; this is a legitimate field for a prayer which asks for that which it believes it will receive. Such prayers have force, such prayers do modify, not directly, but indirectly through the effort of man, the course of the universe.

We know that God does not interfere with the order of the universe; we all but know that He does continually interfere with the thoughtful and spiritual life of man: and the interference in the latter case

seems to us as natural, as lawful, and as probable as the interference in the former would seem to us preternatural, lawless, and improbable. For what are we praying for? We are not praying against law, we are not dashing our heads against the dead wall of the universe; we are not bringing our prayers into direct opposition with all that science teaches us. We are, on the contrary, praying that the Father of lights, the God of all knowledge, may enable us to understand His laws better, may kindle our intelligence so that we may go with, not against, the current of the motions of the universe; may bring the impulse of our heart in prayer into accordance with that revelation of Himself in nature, the high-priests of which are the men of science. We are praying that, knowing law, we may be able by our knowledge to lessen evil. I do not think that there is any natural philosopher who would say that this use of prayer was a sin against the law of the conservation of force.

In conclusion, ought we to do away with, ruthlessly, all prayer which asks of God to relieve us of physical misfortune? Ought we to refrain from praying for fine weather when one we love dearly is at sea, or to check the petition on the lips when those who make our being rich are exposed to pestilence? That would seem too hard for the human heart in its moment of agony and suspense; and the paradox is that even when we have no hope, even when we know that God will not change His laws, we ask Him to do so for us. There is a natural rush of the heart into petition which it would be spiritual suicide to check.

Listen to a parable. A certain ruler had two servants, and said unto them, 'Labour every day in the fields from morn till eventide, or be imprisoned for a time.' Now it came to pass upon a certain day when the sun was hot, that both the servants fell asleep and woke only as evening fell. They heard their master coming in and were called to come before him: and the first came in and said, 'Master, no prayers can move thee,' and in angry silence took his sentence: and the other heard, and knew his master to be faithful to his law, but because he loved him he could not be silent, but ran and fell at his master's feet and prayed, saying, 'Release me of the prison.' And his master smiled on him, and said, 'I cannot; take him away.' And he arose and went, but as he went his heart was lightened, and he said to himself, 'The pain at my heart is gone, for I have spoken, and my master has smiled on me.' And he thought of his master's inexorable order, and as he thought, it grew beautiful in his eyes, even while he suffered in the prison. But his fellow-labourer was more angry every day with his master, and the prison grew darker as he chafed against a law which would not forfeit punishment.

So is prayer, when the inexorable laws of the universe threaten your life or the life of one you love. Make no use of it, and your heart breaks from the passion of hidden grief, or grows bitter from the change of grief into anger. But use it, pour out your wild petition at your Father's feet, even though you know it is useless, and the expression gives relief. The perilous stuff is lifted off, and you are able to bear the new pain with the

old courage. You have cast your care upon a Father, and though He does not stay the blow, He smiles upon you, and the prison of your sorrow is made bright with the thought of His love. A strange conviction of security comes upon your life. 'He will not err from order,' you say, 'even to relieve me of my pain; I can therefore trust Him as I could not trust Him if I thought my weak and ignorant will could bend His all-wise will, directed by His love. His love!—yes, I feel that His love would not be worth having, could not be trusted were it not one with unchangeability.' In this way, we learn slowly to grow into harmony with His will, to submit to it with contentment mingled with the pain we suffer, to say to ourselves, 'Better that His perfect will should guide me, than that I should be the victim of my own imperfect will.' The result of that is peace. Therefore, pray, for it relieves you by expression—it brings God's fatherhood and all its infinite comfort home to the heart; it leads to the peace which comes of recognising that you are in the hands of unchangeable affection directed by unchangeable Right.

Lastly. Prayer at such moments produces change of mind in you towards the suffering you endure. The prison seemed terrible to the servant, but when he got there, it was not what he expected. His prayer and the smile he had won had altered the relation of his feeling towards the punishment, and alteration of character changes things, not in themselves, but to us. A man is perishing, I will suppose, in a tempest. His wildest prayer, he knows, cannot save him or his wife, folded in his last embrace. But natural feeling will have its

way, and the prayer, Save us, our God, rushes to his lips. They are not saved, the sea drinks up their life —but it is no dream, but told by many a survivor, that in the ghastliest wreck there have been those over whose faces after prayer there has stolen an expression of unutterable peace and joy. Words have been spoken, which said that death had become beautiful, that spirits brought into harmony by prayer with the will of a Father, and beholding the smile upon His face, had seen, by a wondrous triumph over all that is terrible to man, in the raging sea and the terror of the midnight hurricane, only the vision of perfect love, and died as men die in happy sleep. In this way the necessary expression of impassioned feeling in prayer, which is the poetry of the spirit, changes our relation to suffering, and so changes suffering itself into peace or joy.

And now, to sum up all these things. We cannot, dare not, ought not to ask God to change the order of nature, with any expectation that He will grant our prayer—yet, we *must* use such prayers for the sake of expression of feeling. And in so praying to God as our Father, we do get rid of half our suffering, though not of that which causes our suffering, and even, in a further result, change our pain, our punishment, or our misfortune, into causes of the peace and joy which flow from the realisation of His Presence with us who is the Lover of our souls.

THE FORCE OF PRAYER.

'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'—Matt. vii. 7.

The key-note of my text is the force of Prayer, and it is our subject this morning. We spoke not long ago of the difficulties between prayer and science, and I endeavoured to find a common ground on which both could endure the existence of the other.

Our decision was, that if the constancy of force be true, those who pray for the slightest change of sequence pray for a miracle. When we pray for a shower of rain, we ask for as great a miracle as the levelling of Monte Rosa to a plain. There is no large or small in nature, except to us—and a change infinitely small to us may produce immeasurable results. Unless we are prepared, then, to declare that miracles are things of daily occurrence—and *that* destroys the notion of a miracle—unless we are prepared to hand over the order of the weather to the wants and freaks of religious men, we must give up imagining that our prayer can change the order of nature, or that God will change it at the instance of our prayer. Prayers for rain, for fine weather, and the whole class of prayers which deal with physical changes, are impotent so far as these physical

changes are concerned. Prayer, unless we assume a miracle, has never altered and does not alter a single physical sequence. It has no direct influence on nature. The question then arose, whether it had any indirect influence, or whether a prayer of this class was of any use whatever. We were forced to consider this, for we were met by the fact that the human heart in difficulties arising from physical causes naturally rushed into prayer. It was scarcely possible, we thought, that this natural impulse had no meaning and no end. I attempted to give an answer to that question, but as I left it partly unexplained, I will now add enough, I hope, to make it clear.

Though prayer does not change law, it changes the relation of men to law, not physically, but spiritually. Take for example a national prayer against a pestilence. It will not take away the pestilence, but when a whole mass of men pray for one thing, attention is directed to it, enquiry is set on foot, unity of action is supported, and the pestilence is checked by the discovery of its causes and their destruction. But if prayer only did that, it would do no more than a few vigorous speeches made by physicians might do. It does more. It puts in motion the mighty engine of moral feeling; it makes every man conscious of his national responsibility to God for the health of the nation; it kindles the charity which devotes itself to the sick, the faith which supports endeavour; it makes each man feel his sinfulness and his need of God, and his connection with a Father. And as a consequence of these feelings a higher tone pervades and a higher spirit fills the

general life of the people, and the whole effort against the pestilence is assisted by the immense force which belongs to the spiritual power of men. In this way, prayer helps to change man's relation to law, helps to put him on the side of law. Once on its side, he conquers the pestilence according to law.

Again, we said that though it was impossible, without a miracle, to alter physical phenomena, and therefore useless if not too daring to ask God to do so, yet that in the case of scarcity, we might ask God to awake the energy and arouse the industry of the farmers; in the case of pestilence to lead scientific men to discovery of its causes, and in the case of both to inspire those who govern with wise measures. This was, we thought, a legitimate prayer, for God acts directly on the spirit and intellect of men. But it has been objected to me that this making of a lazy farmer energetic, or the inspiration of an idea into a statesman, is in itself a miracle. I cannot quite discover the ground of the objection, but I suppose that it is founded on the fact that thought and emotion are accompanied by vital changes in the brain matter, and therefore that the introduction from without of new thought is in fact equivalent to the introduction of new force. But this goes upon the supposition, of which no proof can be given, that motion in the brain *is* thought and feeling. We certainly can conceive of them as distinct from physical phenomena, though in us they may always be attended with physical changes. Because the thought that two and two make four is accompanied by an atomic change, it does not follow that that atomic change is the

thought. When a man does a gracious act to a woman and she blushes with gratitude, or love, a series of vital changes takes place, but it cannot be proved that the vital changes are gratitude and love. Therefore I have a perfect right to say at present, that the suggestion of a thought to a man's mind by God, or the awaking in him of a strong emotion, does not interfere with the constancy of force. It does not add new force to the sum of force, but it does do this, it does make the modes of force interchange, the play of force within its circle more rapid. But it will be said that force cannot alter its form without a previous touch of force, and that therefore the suggestion of thought which alters the condition of vital forces must be itself an introduction of new force, and therefore impossible. Well, this is just the point where we get into the darkness. When I will to do a duty, I set up a series of vital changes, but in willing alone, have I intruded something new into the close-packed realm of force? or is my will itself a mode of physical force? It seems to me, no; it seems to others, yes. At least it is not proved one way or another, and till the materialist has given me full proof of his position, I cannot be said to demand a miracle, when I say that God speaks directly to the spirit of man.

Moreover, this which is said to be a miracle is done every day by man to man. A single sentence from the lips of a scientific man has stirred a whole series of new thoughts in another. A verse of the Bible has changed a blasphemer into a penitent. A great painting has consoled a sorrowful soul. Love has made the coward

brave, the indifferent earnest, the lazy energetic; and God's action on the intellect and the soul, which I aver may be secured by prayer, is done in the same way as that of man on man, only it is infinitely more subtile and great in proportion to His greater power.

It has nothing to do with miracle. Miracle is a change in the ordinary sequence of physical events; this is the action of the spiritual upon the spiritual, of mind on mind; and, if we grant a spiritual world at all, it seems to be an action not only perfectly lawful, but also agreeing with our own observation of the action of our spirit and mind on those of others.

Once more, miracles are, by the hypothesis, rare. Such action as I speak of is ceaseless. Love works such direct 'miracles' every day; but mark how it works. It does not produce any direct change in the physical world. All the love in the world will not stop the rising wind which threatens to chill your child to the death as you stagger belated with her across the snowy moor, nor stay the tooth of consumption which is gnawing at the life of your husband. But it will make the child die in peace looking lovingly into your eyes to the last; it will change the husband who has neglected you into a sorrowing and loving man. The two worlds are different. Force only acts within force. Spirit acts on spirit, and both according to their own laws. Now the influence of which I speak does not enter into the dominion of physical force, and where it touches it, it does not interfere with it.

But our main question to-day is, what is the force of prayer?

It derives its force first from its being the satisfaction of a want in man. Man needs to worship some one. In youth, in manhood, he finds friends, objects of still intenser love. But they do not fill the deep abyss of his necessity; the love he bears to them is exclusive, is partly selfish. In their purest and dearest form our affections do not disappoint, but they do not satisfy. We are thrown back upon God, not that we want to lose the earthly affections, but to fulfil them, to hold them involved and hallowed in a perfect adoration.

But God—what is the God we worship? Is it a God without us, only the Maker of the universe, the absolute Source of power, the Lord of law? That conception awakens awe, but not love. Try it in your hour of unhappiness, and you find while you tremble that you hate it.

What is the God we worship? Is it only a God within us, a spirit moving through our spirit? We can love that, but our love has a tendency to pass into familiarity and straightway all the subtile essence of it is gone. It disappoints like human love. Or it drifts into an ideal Pantheism, and God is confused with that Ego, by which alone I become conscious of the universe. Then with the fading of the personality of God fades the reality of adoration.

We must have both, a personal God without us, the object of awful veneration—a personal God within us, the object of childlike love. Awe and love combined are perfect adoration, and in that adoration the soul is satisfied, earth is glorified, heaven is in our hearts, and

all our human love raised into something more intense and pure when it breathes this air of the Eternal.

Prayer is the expression of this adoring love, as necessary to man as the adoring love is necessary; and till awe ceases to exalt the soul, and love to be its food, the soul of man must pray. Men may call prayer an absurdity, deny its work, banish its influence, but nature and God will be too strong for them. These men will glide into the absurdity they laughed at when their heart is passionate with sorrow; and as to banishing its influence—they must banish veneration and love from the heart, and then tear away the heart itself, ere they can banish prayer. Its force is here, within us, here in the depth of our want.

But this is a force which is derived from its origin. What is its practical force in life? One form of its force is in its reflex action. It has been remarked by a physician, that the physicians who catch infectious diseases are those who are afraid or who allow fear to master them. It is not difficult to account for this. Fear unhinges the nervous system. It causes vital changes during which vital force is lost. The disease finds the citadel weakened of its defenders, and enters in. On the other hand, a man whose sense of duty is strong, or whose sympathy with pain is greater than his dread, or whose will is master of his nerves, retains his nervous energy, loses no force—the disease finds no feeble point in the physical defence. This is the reflex action of passions on danger.

In the same way prayer acts with force. It does not directly take away a trial or its pain, any more than a

sense of duty directly takes away the danger of infection, but it preserves the strength of the whole spiritual fibre, so that the trial does not pass into temptation to sin. A sorrow comes upon you. Omit prayer, and you fall out of God's testing into the Devil's temptation; you get angry, hard of heart, reckless. But meet the dreadful hour with prayer, cast your care on God, claim Him as your Father, though He seem cruel—and the degrading, paralysing, embittering effects of pain and sorrow pass away, a stream of sanctifying and softening thoughts pours into the soul, and that which might have wrought your fall but works in you the peaceable fruits of righteousness. You pass from bitterness into the courage of endurance, and from endurance into battle, and from battle into victory, till at last the trial dignifies and blesses your life.

And this brings me to another characteristic of the force of prayer. It is not altogether effective at once. Its action is cumulative. At first there seems no answer to your exceeding bitter cry. But there has been an answer; God has heard. A little grain of strength, not enough to be conscious of, has been given in one way or another. A friend has come in and grasped your hand—you have heard the lark sprinkle his notes like raindrops on the earth—a text has stolen into your mind you know not how. Next morning you wake with the old aching at the heart, but the grain of strength has kept you alive—and so it goes on: hour by hour, day by day, prayer brings its tiny spark of light till they orb into a star, its grain of strength till they grow into an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast. The answer to prayer is

slow; the force of prayer is cumulative. Not till life is over is the whole answer given, the whole strength it has brought understood.

> And the lady prayed in heaviness
> That looked not for relief,
> And slowly did her succour come
> And a patience to her grief.
> Oh, there is never sorrow of heart
> That shall lack a timely end,
> If but to God we turn and ask
> Of Him to be our friend.

Again. Its force is not only cumulative, but relieving through expression. There are some griefs, some passionate moral struggles, some fatal secrets of the inner life, which we cannot speak to man. For we cannot give men that knowledge of our whole past, by which alone its secrets can be justly judged. But to our Father who knows all we can speak out. He has no conventional maxims by which to measure us, no half-experience, no harshness, no jealous injustice such as among men demands to be considered love. He cannot, therefore, mistake us—we are sure of justice; and it is that, not love alone, which we ask from Him if our souls be true.

Out of the silent loneliness of the heart, then, the prayer of confession rises to the Fatherhood of God. The weight is lifted off the soul, at least the unbearableness of it is gone. We have told it all to Him—He knew it, it is true—what was the need of telling Him? No need to Him, but comfort to us, for expression gives relief to tortured feeling. As long as we kept it, brooded over it, it was like air in a sealed room; it grew deadlier, and slowly poisoned all the heart.

Expressed, it was like the same air when, the windows thrown open, the sweet spring breeze came flowing in; we rise up—half the horror is gone, half the weight of the secret guilt is lifted off, we begin to feel ashamed of having despaired of life; we begin to feel the duty of forgetting sin and pressing forward into the work of righteousness. This is the blessed work of prayer to God—of simply entrusting to Him all.

It is no strange mysterious work. It has its ceaseless analogies in our every-day life. The morbid youth of the German poet poured out all its sickly feeling in his first prose novel, and it was gone for ever. Burns, riding across the Highland moor, when the sky was dark with thunder and the rain fell in accumulating roar, felt his heart swell almost to breaking with passionate feeling, and sang to himself that battle-hymn in which we hear the rushing rain and the elemental war. Elijah on the mountain, his heart burning with the desertion of a whole people, felt his passion relieved by the earthquake, and wind, and fire, and the still small voice represented to him the calm which had come upon his stormy heart. Jeremiah, indignant with God,* broke into a wild cry, in which he gave expression to his pain, and relieved, he felt the fire of duty burn bright again, and took up again the work of life. And He who was Mankind, burdened with untold sorrow in the sorrowful garden, did not hide his agony from his Father, though He knew it could not be taken from Him, but expressing it, passed into the sublime peace with which He drank the cup

* Jer. xx. 7, 8, 9.

and died. Expression relieves the o'erfraught heart, and, the pressure removed, it rebounds into the natural strength of health. Wordsworth has said it all:—

> To me alone there came a thought of grief:
> A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
> And I again am strong.

Yes, if any here are crushed with unshared sorrow, eaten with the remorse of unhealed and secret sin, chained to a trial which none can understand, and therefore wordless to man—spread it before the God of kindness and justice, before the God of human nature. The method of relief is ready to your hand. Make use of prayer.

Lastly. It has the power of sanctifying life because it brings God into life. Twice in the day it has been for ages the habit of the race to use this talisman; once for the sanctification of the day, once for the sanctification of the night. The morning prayer chimes in with the joy of the creation, with the quick world as it awakes and sings. It ought to bind itself up with the rising of the sun, the opening of the flowers, the divine service of the birds, the glow of cloudy bars on which the rays of light strike like a musician's fingers, and whose notes and chords are colour. The voice of the world is prayer, and our morning worship should be in tune with its ordered hymn of praise. But in joy we should recall our weakness, and ask His presence who is strength and redemption, so that joy may be married to watchfulness by humility. Such a prayer is the guard of life. It prepares us beforehand for temptation: neglect it and

you fall. It makes us conscious of our Father's presence, so that we hear His voice in the hour of our folly or our sin. 'My child, this morning you called Me to your side; do not drive Me far away. Bridle that passionate temper; restrain that excitement which is sweeping you beyond the power of will; keep back that foolish word which will sting your neighbour's heart; do not do that dishonesty; be not guilty of that cowardice. I am by your side.'

That is the thing which prayer makes real. Prayer, not only in the morning watch, but prayer sent voiceless from the heart from hour to hour. Then life is hallowed, wakeful, and calm. It becomes beautiful with that beauty of God which eye hath not seen. It is not left comfortless, for prayer brings the Saviour to our side. In the hour of our grief we hear the voice of Christ coming down the ages to our soul, tender as the morning light on flowers, 'Come unto Me, all that are weary and heavy laden: I will give you rest.' We hear Him as we sit at business, speaking as He spoke to Matthew at the receipt of custom, 'Follow Me;' and though we know we cannot rise as did the publican, for our work is where He has placed us, yet we know its meaning. We seem to feel his hand in ours in the passion of our endeavour to do right when duty and interest clash, and his grasp gives firmness to our faltering resolution. And when the petty troubles of life, the small difficulties which sting like gnats, the intrusions, the quarrels, the slight derangements of health, have disturbed our temper, and we are in danger of being false to that divine charity which is

the dew of life, one prayer will sweep us back to Palestine, and standing among the circle of the Apostles we shall listen to his voice, 'Love one another as I have loved you.' 'Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you.'

And day being hallowed thus, do not omit to make holy the night. For whether we sleep a dreamless sleep, as if sleep had given us for the time to the arms of his brother death, or wander in the land of 'footless fancies,' where the brain and its servants, having escaped from their master, will, play at their wild pleasure, like things without a soul, we need the presence and protection of God. In dead sleep who can tell where the spirit has been, what worlds it has seen, what lessons it has received, what thoughts have become entwined with it—thoughts of which we are not conscious, but which appear like strangers afterwards, we cannot tell from whence, within the brain.

Hallow these possible voyages by committing your spirit into the hands of God.

But still more we need His watchfulness, or, since He is always watchful, our suppressed consciousness of it, when sleep opens the ivory gate, and we flitter through the fairy life of dreamland.

It is not beauty alone which we encounter there, but mystery more mysterious than that of earth; strange words which seem to be warnings; impressions so vivid that they stamp the day; pain and pleasure so sharp that we cry or dread to dream again; noble thoughts, pure shapes of the imagination, which, unremembered in detail, yet leave behind an inspiring sense of the

infinite things the soul may do; temptations to sin, cruel and impure thoughts, terror even and horror which open to us more dreadful depths of guilt and pain than we can realise awake.

Take, by the power of prayer, through this wild land of dreams, the sanctifying presence of One who loves us. Claim it every night, and it will attend to hallow the fancies of sleep, to save us from the baseness of dream-fear, to call back the wandering fancy from impurity. For prayer, continually lived in, makes the presence of a holy and loving God the air which life breathes and by which it lives, so that, as it mingles consciously with the work of the day, it becomes also a part of every dream.

To us, then, it will be no strange thing to enter Heaven, for we have been living in the things of Heaven. They have even here become realities, and when we step across the drawbridge of death, it is no foreign land we enter, but our native Home. Only the communion with our Father which we have felt here through prayer, shall there be so profoundly greater that prayer will be no more, and praise be all in all.

IMMORTALITY.

'For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.'—Luke xx. 38.

THERE is a common reason for the perverse denial of immortality. It is, that man, when living solely for this world, cannot believe in a world to come. He who is blind has no conception of the stars. He who is without passion cannot believe in enthusiasm. He who lives for himself cannot believe in self-devotion.

And he who is living a base life cannot believe in a noble one. If his soul is plunged in the sensual, he cannot realise the spiritual. When his whole energies are given to this world, he cannot conceive or possess the world to come. There are, then, thousands of men calling themselves Christians, to whom immortal life is merely a name, to whom their little life is indeed 'rounded with a sleep.'

Practically, they disbelieve in immortality. They may even inwardly go further, and deny it to themselves, should the question intrude upon their pleasure. But they do not deny it before the world. Something holds them back from boasting of their unbelief; a consciousness that they have thrown aside a noble thing, a regret which will steal in, that now they can

no longer aspire beyond their present life. Unable to realise immortality themselves, they yet shrink from an open denial of it with a sense of shame and degradation. But still more, it becomes a dreadful thing to them, if they have any sensitive reverence left for the sorrow of Mankind, to throw doubt upon this doctrine. If true, it is so precious that it seems the race might bear any suffering provided it was its fate at last; if it is only held to be false and not proved false, a man may well doubt whether, on his own judgment alone, he should proclaim that he holds it false. There is a devotion to one's own truthfulness which is, in certain circumstances, intolerable cruelty to others, and, in spiritual matters, where proof has not been attained, unless we clearly feel that to disclose our opinion is good for man, we are only Pharisees anxious to placard our honesty when we loudly proclaim our negations in public or in private. Truthfulness without charity is a vice and not a virtue, as love without truthfulness to moral right becomes idolatry.

And men in general have felt this, and when they disbelieved in immortality have held their tongue.

Moreover, they have refrained, because they insensibly felt that practically the denial of immortality is atheism. Clinging still to the notion of a God, they connect with Him their ideas of right and wrong. He is their source, and He allots their sanctions. But no one can long continue to believe in and to love a God who is assumed to give us these ideas, and then so forgets all about His gift and His creature as to plunge obedience and disobedience into the same nothingness;

or who by wilfully annexing annihilation to all human lives alike, proclaims that in His eyes, Tiberius, rotting to a shameless death in Caprea, is on the same level with the Saviour dying on Calvary for the Truth. One must feel that such a God would be wicked. He would deny that very morality which we imagine He has implanted in us. We should be obliged to deny His existence in order to retain our morality. To disbelieve in immortality is to disbelieve in God: with the fall of the one, falls the other.

And this also men have felt, and I know no instance where the denial of immortality has not led directly to atheism. Men did not like to realise, by putting their denial of immortality into speech, that they did not practically believe in God at all.

But these motives have now ceased to operate, at least to the same extent. The question has entered a new phase. Immortality is boldly or quietly denied, not only by impure and selfish men, but by men of culture and of a high morality. It is accompanied, as it must necessarily be, by latent or overt atheism, as a cause or a result of the denial.

What are the particular causes of this denial at present? One is the prevalence of certain theological views which, once largely accepted, are now felt to be repugnant to the moral sense. Good men, some among the best and holiest of the race, have held these views, and lived and died by them. And it is a strong proof that theological opinions have no *necessary* connection with goodness that these men have been so good. It proves also that we cannot judge the morality of one time, so far as it relates to the morality of

opinions, by the morality of another time. For few doubted then of the accordance of these opinions with moral right; and now many persons, distinctly, and it seems to me with truth, reject them as immoral.

Among these, the first is the conception of God. The conception of God's nature which has been laid before us for many years, has brought many men at last to turn away from it with dismay and pain. They feel that the morality of the pulpit on this matter lags behind the moral feeling of society. God has been represented, they think, and I think with them, as selfish, as seeking His own glory at the expense of His creatures' welfare, as jealous, as arbitrary, as indulging in favouritism, as condemning all for the sake of one, as insisting on forms of temporary importance and binding them for ever on the conscience, as ruining men for mistakes in doctrine, as claiming a blind submission of the conscience and the intellect, as vindictive, as the resolute torturer of the greater part of the human race by an everlasting punishment which presupposes everlasting evil; as, in one word, anything rather than the Father revealed in Jesus Christ. Much of this teaching remains still, though it is presented under a veil by which its coarser outlines are modified. It is accepted by many who either do not possess a strong and individual sense of morality, or who do not think, or prefer not to think on the matter, lest they should shake the fabric of their easy faith or spoil their religious sentiment. But, those who do, and whose moral feeling of right and wrong is sane and strong, turn away revolted from a God of this

character, believe that to be immortally connected with Him would be degradation, even the very horror of hell.

But not having been taught any other God, and being, to a certain degree, culpably lazy about examining into the teaching of Christianity for themselves, they fall back on their last resource, and disbelieve in immortality. 'It is better to perish for ever, than to be the slave of such a ruler. We deny his existence, and we deny the immortality he is said to promise. But, at the same time, we will be true to our sense of right and wrong; we will do what we can to help the race; we will have our immortality in the memories of the future, or in the "Being of Humanity;" but, as for ourselves, let us cease, for we could not live with the Being who has been described to us.'

Now, I believe this to be, and no one need mistake my meaning, a really healthy denial of immortality, for it is founded on the denial of a false God. And so far as it is founded on the assertion of a true morality, so far it is, though these men do not confess it as such, the assertion of the true God. The God who has been preached to men of late has now become to us an idol, that is, a conception of God lower than we ought to frame, and a revolt against that conception is not in reality a revolt against God; it is a protest against idolatry. I sympathise strongly, then, with that part of the infidel effort which is directed against these immoral views of God's character, though I am pained by the manner in which the attack is conducted —and it is my hope that the attack will lead our theologians to bring their teaching up to the level of

the common moral feeling on this subject, and to reveal God as the Father of men in all the profound meaning of that term. The belief in immortality will then return, for the love of God will return to men. For it is impossible for any man to clearly see and believe in the Father as revealed in Christ and not passionately desire to draw nearer and nearer to Him for ever, and not feel that he must live and continue to live for ever. Therefore, in order to restore to men such as I have described a belief in immortality, we must restore to them a true conception of God. This is, this ought to be, the main work of the preachers and teachers of this time. For as long as the morality of the pulpit hangs behind the morality of religious-minded men, those religious-minded men will be infidels.

Again, another reason for the prevalent disbelief in immortality is the selfish theory of religious life. That theory has almost died away among religious teachers, but the reaction against it still continues. We have given it up, but it is still imputed to us by our infidel opponents.

It is said that we are to do good in order to be rewarded, and to avoid evil, lest we should be punished. In this doctrine, baldly stated as it has been, there is nothing which appeals to the nobler feelings of man. Selfish gratification and selfish fear are alone addressed. It is a direct appeal to that part of our being which is the meanest, as if that were the part which could most readily accept religion. It connects us to God by bonds of self-interest, as a servant to a patron, not by bonds of love, as a child to a father.

Against this theory many rose in revolt, declaring that according to it the desire of immortal life was a selfish desire, and proposing, as an escape from this selfishness, that men should live a noble life without hopes for the future. They set this forth as the highest form of self-sacrifice. 'Live,' they said, 'doing good, without hope of reward, only for the sake of good—hating and fighting with evil, because evil is degradation, not because it is punished. You cannot do this if you accept the Christian doctrine of immortal life. For it nourishes selfishness. It locks a man up in care for his own safety. On the highest religious grounds, we deny the doctrine of immortality as prejudicial to a noble and pious life.'

And if that were really the Christian doctrine, they would do well in denying it, and we might be driven to accept their fine-sounding theory of self-sacrifice.

But we meet it, first, by a blunt contradiction of the false representation of Christianity, from which it has sprung as a reaction. Christianity says precisely what these men say, only not in so abstract a manner. It asks us to do good, not for the sake of abstract good, but for the sake of being like to God—the personal goodness. That is not a selfish doctrine, nor does it lead to selfishness. It urges us to avoid evil, lest we should become unlike God, in whose image we are, and whose temple we become. That is not a selfish motive. It takes us out of self, and makes our life consist in living in God, and because He lives in all the race, in living through Him in the interests and lives of all our brother-men. That is not a selfish doctrine.

Its reward is not a selfish reward; it is the reward of being made unselfish, because made like to God. 'Your reward,' said Christ, 'shall be great, for ye shall be the children of your Father;' that is, resembling your Father in character.

Nor does Christianity appeal to fear of punishment, but to the feeling of love. It does not say menacingly, 'Thou shalt not kill, or steal, or be an idolater;' it says, 'Love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and thy neighbour as thyself,' for then, since thou lovest, thou canst not injure thy neighbour, or sin against God. It rejects fear as having torment, as belonging to a spirit of bondage, not a spirit of life. It appeals throughout to self-sacrifice, self-devotion. It asks us to live by all that is noblest in us, to walk worthy of our high vocation—likeness to Christ, who died for men. It does not proclaim the selfish doctrine on which this denial of immortality is founded.

But it is plain that it does declare rewards and punishments; and an objector may say, that even on the supposition that Christianity does not really appeal to the selfish feeling, yet that the introduction of the element of rewards has in itself a tendency to produce selfish feeling.

Certainly, we answer, if the rewards are material, if they belong in any way to the selfish part of our nature. But if they have nothing to do with that, but with that part of our being which lives by the denial of self and the practice of self-devotion, if they are purely spiritual rewards, to long after them is not selfish, but the high duty of the soul. God says, 'Do good, and

you are rewarded.' How? By an increased power of doing good. Is it selfish to desire that? God says, 'Love me, love your brother-men with all your heart, and you shall be rewarded.' How? By deeper capability of loving. Is it selfish to desire that? The true statement of the doctrine of rewards at once dissipates this absurd accusation of selfishness.

To look forward to this increase of the spiritual life, to this daily growth of unselfishness, and to live and act in the hope of that and for its sake; it is ridiculous to call that a selfish theory. To do good, and to think of the reward of being loved by God and of becoming more like to God, is no more a selfish life than to spend one's whole life for one's country, and to rejoice in the idea of being loved by one's country, and becoming more worthy of her love, is selfish for the high-hearted soldier. A life of love lived in the hope of the reward of becoming more capable of love, does not encourage in the heart a single germ of selfishness.

And as to immortal life itself, if you choose to separate it for a moment from these spiritual qualities of love, and purity, and truth (which in us are immortal life) the desire of life, keener, purer, more abounding, cannot be selfish. For it is a natural appetite of the human spirit.

Now the lawful gratification of appetite is not selfish. No one is so absurd as to say that the desire of food or drink when we are hungry or thirsty, for the sake of relieving these appetites, is a selfish desire. No one says that the desire of knowledge for the sake of knowing is a selfish desire. It is a noble appetite of

the intellect. Yet here, when we get into the realm of the spirit of man, we are told that the desire of immortal life for the sake of life, and that acting for the purpose of being a partaker of that life, is selfish, and encourages selfishness. It is a more absurd statement than the previous ones. Desire of life is the most natural appetite of the spirit, and we are in desperate peril of becoming truly selfish when we crush it, or caricature it, or attempt to live without it.

Indeed, that is often the result. I do not speak now of those who replace the doctrine of personal immortality by the mystical and unpractical notion of an immortality in the race, for these at least allow of the existence of a longing and passion for immortality, of which they are bound to take notice; nor of those who frankly, on scientific grounds, avow that they do not believe in the existence of a spirit in man apart from his mortal frame, but of those who quietly, on the fantastic ground of the selfishness of this passion, deprive the race of one of the mighty hopes which make us men.

On the whole, mankind resents this, and resents it justly. It separates itself from these men who have separated themselves from the common longing. They feel their isolation, and retire from the world. Or they become angry with the world, and mock and scorn its aspirations. Or they seclude themselves and their theory in Pharisaic dignity, and thank Fate that they are not as other men are, blinded by superstition, but seated aloft in the clear light of unapproachable self-sacrifice—the martyrs of a grand idea.

The end of it all is that they become as self-involved

as the Simeon Stylites of the poet, as self-righteous, and as self-conceited. Aiming at the utter denial of self, they arrive at the utter assertion of self.

And this result follows, because the self-sacrifice put forward by these theorists is not self-sacrifice at all, but the immolation of the best and most aspiring part of our nature. They give up what is good, and call it self-sacrifice. It is an inversion of the truth, for self-sacrifice is surrendering what is wrong, or pleasurable, for the sake of good to others. There are certain necessary elements in an act of true self-sacrifice. It must be in itself a moral act, and distinctly felt as such by the actor, else one throws the halo of self-surrender over evil; it must not be merely instinctive, but done with a rational belief that it will produce good; and the doer of it must not give up or weaken any element in his nature, the existence and strong existence of which, even in a single individual, is of importance for the progress of the race. It is *not* self-sacrifice to crucify a high desire for the sake of attaining an ideal. It is not self-sacrifice to give up what is true for the sake of being more true. That is as absurd as giving up one friend for the sake of being a more perfect friend to another. You do not gain, but lose so much of power of friendship. And those who surrender the hope of immortal life, for the sake of being freed from all thought of self, do not gain the self-sacrificing heart, they only take away one of the motive powers of self-sacrifice.

On the whole, we want clearer notions of self-sacrifice. There are some things we have no right to

give up. It is not self-sacrifice to surrender our conscience, though we might save a whole nation by doing so. It is not self-sacrifice to be false to our own soul, for the sake of those we love, as the martyr would have been had he worshipped Jupiter, because his father and mother wept at his feet, and were left to ruin by his death. It is not self-sacrifice to commit suicide, as in some novels, for the sake of the happiness of others. It is not self-sacrifice to marry one who loves you, because you do not wish him or her to suffer, when you do not love in return—it is self-destruction. It is not self-sacrifice to cast aside immortality, that it may not vitiate by a taint of self your doing good. It is spiritual suicide; nay, more, there is a hidden selfishness in it, for he who does this is endeavouring to secure his own ideal at the expense of the race of men whom he deprives of the hope which more than all else has cheered and strengthened them in the battle against evil. It is selfish to wilfully shut our eyes to this, that we may indulge a fancy of our own.

For the sake of right reason, if not for the sake of God, do not let yourself be tricked out of your belief in immortality by a subtile-seeming good, by an appeal to a false idea of self-sacrifice. First cast aside the theology which has given rise to this twisted notion of self-sacrifice, and then with a clear judgment you will recognise that the true self-sacrifice is not incompatible with the reward of that immortal life which is in itself nothing less than the life of self-sacrifice. Your smile will then be a quiet smile when men tell you to give up longing for immortality, because it is a selfish ground of action.

What, you will say, is it selfish to hope to be for ever unselfish, is it selfish to desire to be at one with the life of Him who finds his life in giving Himself away? Is it selfish to aspire to that fuller life which is found in living in the lives of others by watchful love of them? These are my rewards, and every one of them ministers to and secures unselfishness.

Lastly, there is another reason for the denial of immortality, which arises from theological teaching. It is the extremely dull and limited notions of the future life. We have too much transferred to our northern Christianity and our active existence of thought the Oriental conceptions of heaven drawn from the book of the Revelation. We have taken them literally instead of endeavouring to win the spiritual thoughts of which these descriptions are but the form. And literally taken they are wholly unsuitable to our Teutonic nature. They make the future life seem to our minds a lazy dreamy existence, in which all that is quickest and most vital in us would stagnate, in which all that makes life interesting, dramatic, active, would perish. It is not needless to notice this. For it is astonishing how even among men who should have known better, the early childish conceptions of heaven remain as realities. I have met active-minded working-people, and cultivated men, who looked forward with dislike to death, because they dreaded the dulness of the next world. Till we have a higher, more human conception of the future life than that usually given, we shall not restore to society a joyful belief in immortality. Our theology wants a picture of the world to come, fitted to meet a larger and a

worthier ideal of humanity. If we wish to awake interest in the future life, we must add to the merely spiritual ideas of uncultivated teachers, others which will minister food to the imagination, the intellect, the social and national instincts of man; nay, more, if we believe in the resurrection of the body, others which minister to the delight of the purified senses.

We need only go back to the revelation of Christ to gain the true ground of this wider conception. He revealed God as each man's Father. Now the highest work of a father is education, and the end of God's education of man is the finished and harmonious development of *all* his powers. If in the future life our intellect or imagination is left undeveloped, it is not education; and we cannot conceive of a perfect fatherhood. If all our powers have not there their work and their opportunities of expansion, the full idea of fatherhood is lost. If any of our true work here on earth is fruitless work, and does not enable us to produce tenfold results in a future life, no matter what that work may be, work of the artist, historian, politician, merchant, then the true conception of education, and therefore of God's fatherhood, is lost.

No, brethren, we rest on this, 'I go to prepare a place for you.' A place is prepared for each one of us; a place fitted to our distinct character, a separate work fitted to develope that character into perfection, and in the doing of which we shall have the continual delight of feeling that we are growing; a place not only for us, but for all our peculiar powers. Our ideals shall become more beautiful, and minister continually to fresh aspira-

tion, so that stagnation will be impossible. Feelings for which we found no food here, shall there be satisfied with work, and exercised by action into exquisite perfection. Faint possibilities of our nature, which came and went before us here like swallows on the wing, shall there be grasped and made realities. The outlines of life shall be filled up, the rough statue of life shall be finished. We shall be not only spiritual men, but men complete in Christ, the perfect flower of humanity.

And this shall be in a father's home, where all the dearest dreams of home-life shall find their happy fulfilment; in a perfect society, where all the charming interchange of thought and giving and receiving of each other's good which make our best happiness on earth, shall be easier, freer, purer, more intimate, more spiritual, more intellectual; and lastly, in a perfect polity, 'fellow-citizens with the saints,' where all the interests of large national life shall find room and opportunities for development; and binding all together, the omnipresent Spirit of love, goodness, truth, and life, whom we call God, and whom we know in Jesus Christ, shall abide in us, and we in Him, 'for He is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him.'

IMMORTALITY.

'For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.'—Luke x. 38.

It is remarkable that the theological questions which are now most widely spoken of are no longer those which presuppose a general confession of Christianity, but other and deeper questions altogether; questions the very discussion of which shows how strongly the foundations of the religious world are moved. It is now frequently asked whether there be a God or not, whether immortality be not a mere idol of the imagination. It is plain, when society has got down to these root questions, that modern theology in its past form has no longer the power to do its work, otherwise these things would be axioms. It is plain that, if Christianity is to keep its ground, it must go through a revolution, and present itself in a new form to the minds of men.

It is the characteristic excellence of Christianity that it is able to do this. For with regard to his own religion the saying of Christ remains for ever true—that saying which declares the continued progress of Revelation, 'I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now.'

But when the time draws near for the growth of

Christian thought around a new idea, and for the regeneration of Christian practice by the life which flows from the fresh thought, the change is heralded by the appearance, sometimes in infidel teaching, sometimes in isolated religious teachers, of scattered and disconnected truths, which do not naturally belong to the old form of religion, or which are set up in opposition to it. Being half-truths, or isolated truths, they point forward to a complete form which shall supplement and include them. At the present day many of the new truths, or rather, of the extensions of the old truths, which Christianity will have to absorb, are to be found in infidel teaching, combined with a rejection of immortality and of the being of a God. We shall search for those truths to-day, and try to show that without the doctrine of immortality they have no lasting value, but that in union with it they are of real importance, and ought to be claimed for Christianity.

But first, let us examine for a moment what is taking place at present with regard to Christian and infidel teaching.

During the time when an old form of Christian thought is slowly passing away, having exhausted all it had to give, it repeats again and again with the garrulity of old age the phrases which in its youth were the expressions of living thought and feeling. They fitted then the wants of men, and they were the means by which religious life advanced and religious truth developed. But being naturally cast into a fixed intellectual system, they remained behind the movement they began; they made men grow, but men outgrew them,

for systems become old, but mankind is always young. It follows, then, almost of necessity, that when a certain point in this progress is reached, there will be a strong reaction against the old form of Christianity, and the reaction will contain the assertion of that which is wanting in the dying phase, and a protest against its weakness. Both the assertion and the protest will often be combined with infidel teaching, for there will be many who, seeing these garments of Christianity rotting away, and hearing them declared to be Christianity itself, will believe the declaration, and attack not only the garments but the living spirit itself which is waiting to be reclothed. The infidel teaching on religious subjects will then consist of two parts, a negative and a positive part. The negative will deny or ignore all Christian truth as then taught; the positive will assert some ideas necessary for the present time and answering to some of its religious wants. It is the business of Christian teachers, while setting aside the negations, to claim as their own those positive ideas which, though developed in a foreign soil, are yet derived from Christian seeds. They will say, 'We have learnt from our enemies; they have told us what the age desires. In answer to that desire they have unwittingly fallen back upon Christian ideas and expanded them, led unconsciously thereto by the ever-working spirit of God. Those expansions are ours; we did not see them before, but we claim them now.' If we do that, the infidelity of the infidel, that is, his negations, will slowly share the fate of all negations; and the scattered truths he teaches, taken into Christianity, find in it their vital

union with all its past, and form stepping-stones for its future growth.

This is the general sketch of the movement in which we are now involved. We are at that point in it in which we are beginning to recognise that the infidel is teaching a few truths which naturally belong to Christianity. But we have not yet fully assimilated those truths, or established their connection with those we possess. Not till that is done will our wider form of Christian thought be completed.

Let us take the two main forms of infidelity which prevail—secularism and Comtism; the first, widely spread among the working-classes; the second—the religion of positivism, to call it by its other name—held by a small number of the cultivated class.

Both of these hold in them ideas which ought to be ours. It is said that these ideas are foreign to Christianity. On the contrary, I believe that they are the children of Christianity born in an alien land, and moreover, that they fit more harmoniously into the Christian system than into the system with which they are now united.

Of the coarse brutal secularism which does nothing but deny and bluster, I have nothing to say; but there is another form of it which does not so much deny as say, 'We do not know; there may be another life to come, there may be a God, but we cannot prove these things. They are wrapped in mystery; they leave us in the mystery. God, if there be a God, gives no answer to us. All the feelings which we are asked to feel about Him, all the hopes and fears which cluster

round the doctrine of immortality, only hinder our practical work, make us think of ourselves and not of our duty; nay, more, they do harm, for more suffering and evil have come upon the race, more cruelty and more hindrances to progress have arisen from these notions than from any others. We will put them utterly aside, and act by faith in other ideas.'

This is their denial, and even from this we may learn much. For the God the conscientious secularist denies is the God of whom we spoke last Sunday—a God of arbitrary will, who makes salvation depend on assent to certain systems of theology, and men responsible for sins committed before they were born; who dooms the greater part of the race to eternal wickedness. And the immortality he does not care for is an immortality based on the selfish doctrine of which we also spoke, which by working on the fears and greed of men produces persecution in public and continual brooding on self in private—above all, which destroys unconscious aspiration. Looking at this, we learn our faults; we are driven back to that conception of a Father which Christ revealed. We are taught to preach a loftier view of the nature of immortal life. We turn and say to the secularist, 'The God whom you reject we reject; the immortality you deny, we deny also.'

But we may learn much more from what he asserts as his religion. He believes that nature contains all things necessary for the guidance of mankind, that duty consists in a steadfast pursuit, according to the laws of nature, of results tending to the happiness of the race, and that in doing that duty he becomes happy.

His God is duty, his Bible is nature, his heaven is in the happiness of man and the progress of mankind to perfection. His sin is in violating natural laws, because such a violation is sure to bring evil on men.

The two main ideas running through this we ought to learn to make more prominent in Christianity—the idea that man has a higher duty to mankind than to himself, the idea of the progress of the race to perfection. The first is distinctly contained in the whole spirit of the life of Christ; the second in the Christian conception of God's Fatherhood. But there is no doubt that our Christianity has not sufficiently dwelt on these thoughts, and that the Christianity of the future must absorb them. We accept then with thankfulness this teaching from without, but we say that to fulfil it in action and to bring it home to the hearts and lives of men, there must be added to it the Christian ideas of God and of immortality. The absence of these deprives the secularist of any certain ground for that reverence for human nature and for that faith in ultimate perfection without which there can be no *joyous* self-sacrifice for man, no unfaltering work for his progress. Their absence deprives him of the mighty impulse which arises from a profound love for an all-loving person, and replaces it by the weaker impulse which is born of love to an abstraction called duty, or to a 'Humanity' which is always disappointing the love which is lavished on it, till our love, feeding on imperfection, becomes itself enfeebled or corrupt. Their absence deprives him of the idea which more than all others makes a religious society coherent—that all its members are held together

by the indwelling in each, and in the whole, of one personal spirit of good; of the idea which makes work for human progress persistent—that all work done here is carried to perfection in a kindlier world, not only in the everlasting life of each worker, but in the mighty whole of a human race destined to slowly form itself, through the undying labour of each and all in God, into the full-grown man. And, finally, their absence deprives him of any large power of appeal to those deep-seated feelings of awe, mystery, and adoration, which are drawn out in men by the idea of God; and which are, when linked to the inspiration which flows from the love of a perfect man, the source of that enthusiasm which supports and continues a religion.

Practically, then, we should expect *à priori*, that secularism, on account of its negation of God and immortality, could not float its noble ideas. And this is really the fact; it has had many followers, but the greater number do not remain in it; they change out of it into many Christian sects, or they pass from entire unbelief into credulity. Some are the victims of remote and strange phases of fanaticism; others, like Robert Owen, end in the opposite extreme of 'spiritualism.'

Nor have the societies or sects of secularism any coherence; none of them can keep up a permanent organisation, and their quarrels are as bitter as they say that those of Christians are. The very best among them pass through life doing their duty to the last, but in a kind of mournful hopelessness, their heart unsatisfied though their intellect may be at rest; for there is, deep down in their minds, the painful suspicion that clinging

to negations may after all be itself as blind a superstition as any of those which they attack.

To sum up all, there are a few ideas in secularism which owe their origin to the insensible growth of the ideas of Christ among men. These ideas are in advance of the accepted Christianity of this day, but they are inoperative in secularism. When we take them into connection with the belief in God and immortality, they will become operative, but they will modify the present form of Christianity.

Secondly, we consider the religion of positivism in the same light. It maintains, though in a different and more cultured form, the same views on these points as secularism. But it avoids negations for the most part, and confines itself to saying that Christianity has nothing more to give to man; that its good influence is exhausted for the western nations. In it the Christian doctrine of God and immortality entirely disappears. In spite of this, and far more than secularism, it has drunk deep of the spirit of Christianity: most of its doctrines may be directly inferred from the teaching of Christ and the Apostles, and in fact are unconsciously derived from it. Only it is to be said, that the accredited Christianity of the day has not yet arrived at these expansions of Christian ideas, that, so far, the followers of Comte's religion are in front of us, and that we ought, in spite of the curious and infidel surrounding of these new thoughts, to claim them as by right our own and embody them in Christianity.

The future Christianity will have to take into itself

such doctrines as social and international self-sacrifice, which is a direct and logical expansion of the Christian doctrine of self-sacrifice. It is surprising, if anything is surprising, that we have not done this already; that in our pulpits we only speak of the self-sacrifice of one person for another, and almost nothing of the duty of the citizen to sacrifice himself for his parish, for social ends, for the State; of the duty of nations to sacrifice their own interests for the sake of the community of nations, and of the duty of the community of nations to sacrifice much in the present for the sake of the future welfare of the whole race. Nor must we leave out other positivist doctrines, such as the necessity of giving to each of the human faculties their appropriate work in connection with a large idea of religion—a doctrine contained, as I think, in S. Paul's view of the relation of gifts and of distinct characters to the growth of the race in God, and of the working* of these differing gifts by a divine spirit for that purpose; nor yet that other doctrine of the sanctification of all human effort to the good of man, so that social feeling may be victorious over self-love, which is in fact the re-declaration, in a wider form than we declare it, of the whole aim and spirit of Christ's life; nor yet that other doctrine of the union of science, art, and morality into an harmonious whole, under the regenerating influence of the worship of humanity—a conception which we shall take, and only change by replacing the worship of humanity by the worship of the Christ as the representative and

* 'All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.'

concentration into an ideal man of the whole race as it is in God; nor yet, finally, that other idea of the race as one great Being ever living and moving on by the service of each to the use of the whole, which is, in truth, the idea of the race as 'the full-grown man' laid down by S. Paul in the Epistle to the Ephesians, adding, however, to this last thought that which gives it reality and concrete form—the belief in One who is the federal Head of this great Being, because He is Himself in perfection that which the race is as yet imperfectly. These are the doctrines which we gladly receive as expansions of our Christianity, and by which we modify our present form of it.

But we shall absorb them, retaining that which the religion of positivism leaves out as unnecessary, but without which, as we think, these new ideas die of starvation—the belief in the Being of a loving Father, and in the endless life of each and all. That there does exist in man the desire of adoring an all-embracing Being, and the desire of immortality, positivism, unlike secularism, is too wise to deny, and it attempts to provide for these two passions in its religion. Instead of God, it presents us with humanity conceived of as a vast organism composed of all men and women who have lived for the sake of mankind. This is the Being we are to worship, and of whom we ourselves are part; we devote our thoughts to the knowledge of her, our afflictions to her love, our actions to her service. To become, in the thoughts of men, at one with this Being whose life renews itself throughout all time, and to be commemorated and loved by

men to come, to have our immortality in the continued existence and affection of the race—this is the reward and this the eternal life which this religion offers to our acceptance.

Well, if such an object of worship, and such an immortality, satisfy the passions and longings, the existence of which the positivist confesses in others, it will be very strange. He allows that they do not satisfy men as at present constituted, that the old feelings must be driven out before the new gospel be received. But we are told that education from the positivist point of view will transfer the feelings now expended on God to this new Being, and that the aspirations which now cluster round immortality will have their satisfaction in the delight of having our work interwoven with the progress of mankind. Against these assertions one can only appeal to time for a full reply. But it does seem true that men, if they worship, wish to worship what is perfect and absolute, and that the worship of an imperfect and growing humanity cannot ever satisfy their wish. And it also seems true that men, if they worship, wish to worship one whom they can distinctly conceive as a person in relation with themselves, and in whom, as the ideal Man, each man can love his race. The Great-Being of the Comtist does not realise this wish. The organism of which he speaks is not distinct to thought, is not a person, is not capable of entering into separate relations of affection with individuals. The whole thing, while professing to be specially human, seems to me specially inhuman. Nor will men, I think,

be satisfied to live only in the memory of those to come, and to exchange the promise of immortal life (growing fuller, wiser, more intense in work and enjoyment of growth, more individual and yet less liable to self-absorption, every day) for the promise of annihilation except so far as their influence and acts remain in the continued progress of the race. They will say: 'All you promise me I have already in Christianity, and the something more which you do not promise. The past and all its human story is far more living to me than it is to you. I belong in Christ (who has redeemed and is redeeming all men) to all the spirits who have been. I am a part, not of a "humanity," all the back portions of which are dead, but of a mighty army of living men, who, though called dead to us, are yet united to us in spirit, and doing human work in God, in a world to which I am going. Nor do I only belong to the past and present of mankind; I belong in God, who holds eternity within Himself, to all the future of mankind. Those yet unborn are living in Him, and therefore bound to me. And all the beings of the human race, on earth and in heaven, are advancing together—a vast polity, under the education of the Lord and King, whose name is Eternal Love. Till you can bring your conception up to the level of that magnificent conception, we refuse to take it into serious consideration. It is a lower thought, and we cannot change gold against lead.'

We believe, then, in the eternal progress of the race in God, not only in the immortality of individuals, but in the immortality of mankind. It made men fairly object

to immortality when it was held to secure to a few continuous union with good, and to the many continuous union with evil. It is to this false and cruel view that we owe the spread and the strength of secularism. But day by day the doctrine of the eternity of evil is being driven into its native night before a higher view of the nature of God, and a nobler belief in Him as the undying righteousness. We are beginning to understand what Christ meant when He said, 'Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I *must* bring; and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.' It was a 'must,' an imperative duty which the Saviour felt, and He spoke in the name of God, who feels the same as a necessity of His relation to us.

The act of creation lays on us a duty. We bring a child into the world, and the absolute imperative of God is on us to feed, educate, and love to the end, that to which we have given life. We do our best for the child, but we will suppose that all goes wrong. We expend our love upon him, he rejects it; we punish, and he hardens under punishment and leaves us; we go after him, and he refuses to return; we give him up to himself for a time, and he grows worse, and dies impenitent. But if we are of a true human nature, we cannot forget him. Our first thought in the other world is our erring son, and if we can—and I for one do not doubt it—our one effort in the eternal life will be to find him out and redeem him to our heart by any sacrifice which love can prompt. And even could love not move us, duty would call us to this righteous quest. We *must* bring our wanderer home.

It is so, I firmly believe, with God and men. By the very act of creation God has laid upon Himself a necessity of redemption. We wander from Him, and He punishes us through His spiritual laws; we reap that which we have sown; we fill our belly with the husks which the swine eat. He lets us eat of the fruit of our own devices, the day of retribution comes, and our pleasures turn to gall, our irritated desires become our hell. Lower and lower still we sink, and suffering is hard on us, for impenitent man must touch the abyss of God's chastising tenderness before pride and self be conquered into penitence. But God waits and works; 'Them also I must bring' speaks the necessity which flows from His Fatherhood. All through our deepest ruin God's victorious love is opposed to man's reluctant hatred and despair; till at last they, being of the finite finite, and of the dead things of the universe dead, are shattered to pieces by persistent love; and the child, come to himself, calls out from the depths of a divine misery, 'I will arise and go to my Father.' Far off his Father sees him, and in triumphant joy receives him: 'This my son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found.' It will be thus within eternity, till, in the fulness of charity, there shall be at last one flock and one shepherd—most tender and most true of images. Contrast it, in its beauty, with the common notion of the future of the race; that notion which has maddened men into atheism and hatred of immortality—a small flock on which all the infinite love of the infinite goodness is outpoured, and beyond its fold a howling wilderness

of lost and ruined souls, lost and ruined for ever and ever, and rained upon by the eternal fires of the everlasting anger of a vindictive God. It is not so; that is not our God—nor that our heaven, nor that the immortality for which we cry. God must bring all His creatures to Himself. 'There shall be one flock and one shepherd.'

As long as the horror of everlasting punishment, or, as it may be better expressed, of everlasting evil, is preached, secularism will keep alive. Rough-thinking men at this time of the world cannot stand Manichæism; and it is no wonder that they deny God, when one of the main things they are told is that God either keeps up evil for ever in His universe, or is unable to put an end to it. Nor is it any wonder that they become unbelievers in Christianity, when a doctrine is linked to Christianity which denies their moral instincts, and makes them look on God as the sovereign tyrant; which forces them to consider the story of redemption as either a weak effort on the part of an incapable God, or a mockery by Him of His creatures on the plea of a love which they see as scornful, and a justice which they declare to be favouritism. I prophesy, as this doctrine perishes, the resurrection of the working-classes from secularism into faith in the Father of men. I foresee a brighter, more joyous, more natural Christianity, in the midst of which faith and hope shall abide and love which never faileth. Fifty years hence we shall all believe in the victorious power of goodness, and the test of orthodoxy shall not be that which I once heard applied to a young clergyman, 'Sir, do you

believe in the devil?' It will be this: 'Do you believe in God?'

Again, the doctrine of immortality was fairly objected to when it led men to dwell on their own salvation as the first thing, when it promoted the idea of individualism to the loss of the idea of association. To this tendency of the doctrine we owe its rejection by the positivist religion, for it injured one of the foremost doctrines of Comte—that self-love must be systematically subordinated to social and international sacrifice; that all men and nations ought to be bound together as one man.

The tendency against which there has been this reaction is indeed contained in the Christian doctrine: it does dwell on and deepen individuality. But it was a shameful thing when men tore away this element of the doctrine from its brother-element, isolated it, and turned it, as a half-truth, into a lie. For the doctrine was united on its other side to the frankest sacrifice of the individual to the whole; nay, it gave men to understand that without the largest sacrifice, immortal life could not be attained. 'Whosoever saveth his life shall lose it,' said Christ, 'and whosoever loseth his life, the same shall save it.' He Himself *was* the Eternal Life because He died for the whole world of men. 'I could wish myself accursed from Christ,' said S. Paul, 'for my brethren, my companions' sake.' There was no base individualism in that noble speech; to have the spirit which can say it is to have immortal life.

Nor did Christianity in its relation to immortality shut out the element of association. Its original church

was chosen from mankind for the purpose of bringing all mankind into it. The heathen world are spoken of as apart from it, but only as *then* apart from it; its object was to unite all nations into one, to bring the wildest and remotest within its realm. No class was left out, no classes existed in its spiritual kingdom; all were children of God, brothers of one another; and this was their immortal life in the spiritual world, that they all lived in and for each other. The images used to describe the Christian idea of the Church were images of association; a temple built of living stones—a human body, whose head was Christ, from whom 'the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love.' That is not the doctrine of each man for himself, but of each for all. The same idea is more fully carried out in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xii. And I must here say that these epistles are not to be taken as addressed to a close sect of believers; they were written to all the Corinthian Church, and through them to all mankind. Nor were these words spoken to specially holy persons, but to the whole body of men, bad or good, in that Church; to fanatics, to drunkards who scandalised the Supper of the Lord; to defenders of incest; to men fighting with one another and divided into religious sects, as well as to the righteous.

S. Paul begins by speaking of the diversities of gifts, and of their use in the progressive education of the whole body, each ministering that which the other wanted.

He goes on to say that 'all have been baptised into one body, whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free;' for there was no separation of nations or classes. The isolation of one from the rest is then condemned, for the body is not one member, but many; nor can any member separate himself from the body because he is not as another, 'for if the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand I am not of the body, is it not therefore of the body?' Nor can any member say that he can live without the life of any other member, 'The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee—nay, even those members of the body which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour, and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need, but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked; that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.' Mazzini himself could not now, eighteen hundred years after, declare more strongly the principle of association; Comte could not assert more largely the doctrine of international interdependence. Of course it may be said that these things were written solely to the Christian Church. That I deny, if the Christian Church is taken to mean any isolated body at any time in history. They were written to describe the ideal of the Christian Church, and that ideal includes all mankind. They describe

what ought to be the relation of nations to nations, of nations to tribes of every type and colour, of men to men all over the world. And they describe what will be in the fulness of time, when the body of mankind, past, present, and future, shall be wholly finished, and the actual be identical with the ideal Man.

It is this mighty conception which we ought to link to our thought of immortality. Without it, the desire of eternal life becomes selfish and swiftly falls to evil; with it, it grows into the grandest thought which a man can have on earth; with it, immortality binds itself up with all the noblest speculations of patriot, philosopher, and lover of man, with all the ideas of our time which have regard to an universal and united mankind, giving to them new strength and coherence, a fresher hope, an unashamed faith; and leading them beyond the silence and inaction of the tomb, where positivist and secularist bury for ever the mighty drama of the past of men, bids them look forward with a morning light in their eyes to the endless beauty and unfailing work of a mankind so loved, so deeply loved by us, that when for a moment the thought crosses our brain that it could die and make no sign, something seems to break within our heart.

IMMORTALITY.

'For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.'—Luke xx. 38.

It has been said by the author of the 'History of Rationalism' that 'the discoveries of modern science form a habit of mind which is carried far beyond the limits of physics.'

Nowhere is this more true than in the scornful doubt with which some natural philosophers meet the belief in immortality, or in the bold denial which they give it. It is not long ago since I heard a geologist say, 'As a body we have given up the belief in immortality.' It may be worth while to-day to suggest, first, a cause for this wide-spread surrender of an old belief among the men who pursue physical science; secondly, to look into the reason they give for their denial, and to see if that reason be reasonable; and, thirdly, to suggest a proof of the doctrine.

1. The cause I believe to be, in the case of many men of science, an unequal development of their nature; in other words, a want of uniform culture. They give up their whole life and all its energy to the study of physical phenomena. In these phenomena they find nothing spiritual. The strata of an ocean-bed tell them

nothing, in their vast succession of life and death, of the eternal continuance of the individual. The combinations of the elements do not speak of the union of the soul with the Eternal Soul of God, and in the convolutions of the brain and the interweaving of the nerves they will not discover faith, or love, or reverence; or, not being able to deny their existence, they say that they dissolve with the nerve matter of which they are modes of motion. Not only do they study nothing but these things, but they put aside any suggestions of spiritual feeling which may come to them in their work as disturbing elements, as dimming the 'dry light' in which they toil. It is no wonder, then, that their spiritual faculty becomes dwarfed or paralysed, till, not finding its motions in themselves, they are ready to deny their existence elsewhere. On the other hand, their peculiar habit of mind becomes abnormally developed, and even their imagination is only used in one direction. They are like men who should sit all their life in a chair and exercise their arms violently. Their arms become immensely strong, their legs so feeble that they cannot walk. One would not be surprised to hear these persons say, 'On the whole, as a body, we have given up any belief in walking being either pleasant or intended for the human race.' The answer is, 'You are no judge till you have recovered the use of your legs.'

Nor is one in the least surprised by a similar assertion on the part of some natural philosophers with regard to immortality. Given the previous habit of mind and work, what else but unbelief could ensue? Only we can scarcely refrain a smile when the assertion is made

with a certain Pharisaic air, 'Nature, I thank thee, I am not led away by superstition or feeling, even as these Christians,' and the only possible answer is a smile, such as the natural philosopher would greet a religious man with, who had as much neglected his intellect and its exercise as the denier of immortality has neglected his spirit and its exercise, and who should say, as if it settled the whole question, 'On the whole we have ceased to believe in the truth of the theory of gravitation.'

But again, as there are some who have lost the use of the religious powers through neglect of them, so there are others in whom the religious powers seem wholly wanting. They seem to be born with a radical defect in their nature, and they can no more see the truth or the necessity of immortality than some who are colour blind can see the beauty or the use of colour. None are more upright than this class of scientific men; they love truth and pursue after it in physics without one backward step. But they cannot understand the things of the spirit, for these are naturally foolishness to them.

I can see the use, almost the necessity, of this. Nature has to be ruthlessly examined, forced step by step to yield her secrets. The good of the race demands that a certain amount of this work should be done by men who are not disturbed by the speculations or the passions of the spirit, and though there are many who unite with ease the realms of faith and of experiment under one government, yet there are a few whose work is needed in physics and who would do but little therein if they were called on to contend also in the

world of the spirit. These, I think, are so far sacrificed in this life for the good of the whole; allowed to remain imperfect men that they may do their own special work in a perfect manner. And we accept their work with gratitude, and say to ourselves when we regret their want, 'God has plenty of time to finish the education of His labourers; that which is deficient here will be added hereafter.' But at the same time, while we recognise the excellent work of these philosophers in their own sphere, we ask of them not to force upon us the results of their blindness in another region. If a man cannot see red, we do not let him impose on us the statement that red is not to be seen, even though he may be a perfect musician. If a man cannot conceive immortality, we do not let him impose on us the statement that immortality is a vain dream, even though he may be a natural philosopher of the first rank. We are bound to say to the one, As a musician we accept your criticisms; as a judge of colour you are of no value; and to the other, As a natural philosopher we bow to your conclusions; as a judge of the truth or falsehood of immortality your opinion is worthless.

Again, in no way is the habit of mind of which we are speaking carried further than in the saying of some physiologists that all thought and feeling are inseparably bound up with physical form, with nervous centres and the rest;—that form makes mind, and therefore that mind, feeling, memory, and the desires, the pain, and the joy of that which we call the spirit, perish with the dissolution of the machine of which they are part. I have just as good a right to start from the

other side, and to say that thought makes form;—nay, I have even more right, for by a strict process of reasoning one may fairly arrive at the statement that our own frame and the whole material universe is the product of our own thought. I do not say that I *know* this, nor assert that mind makes form, but it is just as probable as, and even more probable, than the opposite assertion. Both statements are incapable of sufficient proof. Professor Huxley says that 'when men begin to talk about there being nothing else in the universe but matter and force and necessary laws, he declines to follow them;' and equally when men say that there is nothing else in the universe but thought or will or consciousness, we should decline to follow them. The latter is far more possible than the other; I am myself inclined to believe it, but I do not know it. All we know with relation to our body and mind is, that certain physical changes take place simultaneously with every thought and feeling. But no knowledge of the structure of the brain or nerves can show us the connecting link between the two, or enable us to say that physical motion is thought or thought physical motion. 'The passage from the physics of the brain,' says Dr. Tyndall, 'to the corresponding facts of consciousness is unthinkable. Granted that a definite thought and the definite molecular action in the brain occur simultaneously, we do not possess the intellectual organ, nor apparently any rudiment of it, which could enable us to pass by a process of reasoning from the one phenomenon to the other. They appear together, we know not why.' There is no proof, then, that consciousness

is inseparably connected with the physical frame, and therefore no proof that it perishes with it. The truth, then, of the doctrine of immortality remains, considered from the intellectual point of view, an open question, and to daringly assert that it is untrue is ridiculous in the mouth of a sensible man.

I may say here, in a parenthesis, that Christianity by no means denies that thought and form in man are closely connected one with the other. On the contrary, the doctrine of the resurrection seems to imply that the human consciousness needs form in order to be conscious of itself, for it allots a body to the soul. It does not say, as some have vainly fabled, that the body we place in the earth and whose elements pass into the earth, is raised again: it does say that God gives a spiritual body to the soul, whatever that may mean. It throws the matter on the omnipotence of God, and if we believe in God at all, that a new form should knit itself to a mind and spirit which have become personal through the memories and work of a human life is no more incredible than that they should have been originally knit together.

Moreover, should it turn out to be true that there is nothing actually existing but thought, and that our present bodies are only the product of our power of presenting to ourselves our own conceptions—then, supposing that our personal order of thought continues after that which we call death, it will weave out of its consciousness, under changed conditions, a new vehicle for itself, and for ever appear to itself and others to be connected with form.

But to return to our argument. The natural philosopher who may allow the possibility of immortality will at the same time refuse to consider it as a practical question, because, before any intellectual proof can be given of it, a spiritual world must be assumed, and he refuses to believe without proof in the existence of such a world. He takes nothing for granted, he will have faith in nothing which cannot be proved to the satisfaction of the understanding.

Now, I want to try and give some reply to this. I will not assume, as will be seen, a spiritual world. I will only begin with the assumption of the reality of a command, outside of our thought, which bids us do what is right, and supposes that we know what is right. But, even this is an act of faith, and to that our natural philosopher objects in any shape.

Well, it seems to me that precisely the same difficulty which he alleges against the consideration of immortality may be alleged against himself. He too must begin with an act of faith, and without that beginning he can know nothing at all about the physical world. That he does know something about it is plain. How did he win that knowledge? He would say, by deductive and inductive reasoning, accompanied by experiment. I do not contradict him, but I say that he has left out one of the factors of the answer, and a very important one: he has left out the act of faith with which he started. He willed, by an impulse within himself, for which his educated reason can give no proof, to believe in the existence of a physical world. And without that act of faith he could, by any and every process

of reasoning, have only arrived at the knowledge that he knew nothing at all. It is not difficult to make this clear. By the creation of theories which he afterwards proved true through their explanation of all the phenomena within their several spheres, by long experimental arguments conducted from fact to fact, he at last arrived, step after step, at the conception of one thing outside himself by which all things are, and of which all things are forms, and he calls this, Force—the constant force of the universe. And having thus reduced all things to one expression, he may think that he knows all things, or is in the sure way of knowing them. I do not say that he is not; but I do say that he assumes without proof, and by faith, that there is this thing outside of his thought—this Force, which *is* the physical universe. For, without assuming that, what happens as he goes on thinking? He will go back and say to himself, 'Just as I questioned whether red or blue had any real existence, and found that they had none, being only the result produced in my brain by sensations caused in the eye by waves of light of different lengths—and just as when I asked myself whether light had any real existence as light, and found on enquiry that it was only a mode of motion, a form of force, which was light to me because my eye had certain atomic arrangements, but which might be electricity to me, if the atoms of my eye were differently arranged—so now I ask whether force itself has any real existence apart from my thought of it, and therefore whether there be a physical universe at all. And, led by reasoning alone, I am forced to say that it has not, that there is nothing

which I have not first thought, that I can have no thought without having first thought it. By reasoning alone, I come to the conclusion that the whole physical universe is but a picture which my own thought presents to itself, and therefore that I know nothing about it as it really is, *if it is*—for even with regard to my own thought I cannot say whether I really think or only think that I think. I have reached a point at which all certainty disappears. I only know that I know nothing.'

But when we have arrived at this point, and absolutely discredited all existence, even our own—for the argument may be pushed to that—the absurdity of the conclusion tells us that there is something wrong in our method of reasoning, that some factor has been left out.

Our conclusion is that we know nothing, and the understanding, working alone, brings us to that. But one man will say, 'The fact is, that I do know something about the world of nature.' 'Well,' I reply, 'look back and you will find that you either began with an act of faith in the reality of the physical universe, or that you put in that act of faith in the course of your argument.' To another, who allows that his reasoning has led him to the conclusion that he can say nothing certain about physical existence, we reply, 'No, you never can know, till you have resolved to add the factor of faith in an outward world to your argument.'

We must begin our reasoning by an act of faith in the existence of a physical world, real at least to us, practically independent of us; and it is this act of faith which gives consistence to the whole fabric of our

physical knowledge, makes it useful, keeps up our work, and saves us from yielding to the conclusion to which we are driven by the work of the reasoning faculty alone. It is the foundation-stone on which the whole of natural science is built.

An unknown impulse in our constitution, the origin of which we cannot trace, determines our will—in spite of our educated reason—to believe in a physical world. And that is as much and as absolute an act of faith as that whereby we believe in God or in the reality of duty, two things which are one, and which together infer immortality. When the man of science, then, says to me, 'I refuse to consider immortality, it sets out with an act of faith,' I reply, 'You might as well refuse to consider the physical motions of the universe, for to do so demands that you should first believe in a physical universe, a belief for which you can give no proof at all, till you have believed it.'

And now to apply this to the matter in hand—to the question of the proof of immortality. Taking the understanding alone as our guide, and believing nothing which cannot be made plain to reasoning, we arrive in the spiritual region at a conclusion similar to that which we found in the region of physics—at a knowledge only that we know nothing of duty, immortality, or God. We ask and ask again, and the more we ask the more sceptical we become. This or that may be or may not be: I know nothing at all. And this is misery to an earnest man.

But as we find that the natural philosopher begins by willing to believe that there is a physical world

to him, so now in this other region we ask ourselves whether there is nothing in us which claims our faith, and for which we can bring no proof. Is there anything in our consciousness which is independent of our thought? And as we listen we hear a voice which says, 'You were not born only to know, but far more to act; and not to know and through knowledge to act, but to act and through action to know.' We have an impulse to moral activity which we feel is one with our existence, and this impulse seems to be originally beyond all knowledge, to transcend the realm of the understanding, to be, not anything we think, but the ground of all our thinking. And we seem to know immediately and without any proof—by a different kind of knowledge, therefore, than that which we gain from reasoning—that we must obey this impulse or fall into nothingness. If we take up our old habit and submit this inner voice to the questions of the understanding, we are forced to ask if we really feel this impulse or only think we feel it, and speculation suggests that the impulse may be only the thought of a thought which our consciousness presents to us, and that if we act upon it we cannot know whether we really act or only seem to ourselves to act. Tenfold darkness of doubt surrounds us then, and our life becomes like a dream within a dream. Therefore, in despair, we make a bold step, and casting away those enquiries which led us to the abyss of nothingness, we resolve with all our will to believe that this impulse to moral action is absolutely a real impulse and to obey it as the true calling of our life. We set aside the understanding at this

point, and we call faith to our side. Immediately, we know not how, we are convinced that right is a reality, and that we can do what is right and that we shall find our true and only life in doing it. We are convinced of this through faith, and our faith arises not from a series of proofs offered by the understanding, but from our having freely willed to believe in duty, that is, from the whole set of our inward character.

And now, having by faith found this clear starting-point, that we are bound to act according to conscience, what follows? The same voice which tells us that we must act rightly, tells us also, and that necessarily, that our actions will have a result in the future, and as our will and action are conceived of as right, the conception at once arises of a better world in which our will and acts shall have their due value. We necessarily look forward to and live in a nobler world. Where is, then, this nobler world? The religious infidel may accept so far our argument, but he will say that this world to which we look forward is to be found not in any spiritual world but in a future human world, when man has subdued the forces of the universe so that they spoil his work no longer, when he has, by the long effort of those who have been faithful to the cause of freedom and right, produced a perfect state in which each shall love his neighbour, and each nation love its neighbour nation, as himself. This is the nobler world to which our actions and will aspire, and in it are their results. Neither immortality nor a spiritual world need here be inferred from the argument.

But, granting that mankind will reach this perfect state, what is to happen then? There will be nothing more to do, nothing to aspire to left, nothing more to know. Will action then, and aspiration die, and curiosity fail for food? If so, men will cease to be men, mankind will stagnate in its place, or will weep itself to death, for it will have no more worlds to conquer. Such is the necessary result of this theory without the addition of immortal life—and to this miserable end we can quietly look forward, for this we can work with energy and patience! When we have made the race perfect, we have most utterly ruined the race. It seems an intolerable conclusion and an absurd one, and there is no way out of it but either the supposition of the annihilation of mankind which renders our will to do right and the effects we inevitably annex to it ridiculous in our eyes; or the supposition that there is another world where the race goes on under new conditions, to do new work and win new knowledge, where the will to do right has its highest and most sure results.

Moreover, our righteous will has but few results in this world. There are a thousand thoughts which it determines, a thousand feelings it impels, which never pass beyond our inner life. The steady volition towards good of a long life has little result on this earth. Many of the good things we succeed in putting into action miserably fail for want of prudence, or even produce evil in this world. Where, then, are the results of these things? where does the will act? where are the broken lines, the inner life, completed? If nowhere,

and plainly it is not here, then half of our being is made up of broken ends of thread.

We are driven therefore to think that the nobler world in which all good action has its own good results, in which our will (determined towards right) serves always a noble purpose, is another and a higher world, of which we and all our brother-men are citizens. In this world our will has power when we will to do right; it sets on foot in it endless results. In this world, which must be spiritual, because our will is spiritual, we live and move and have our being now, as really, nay more really, than we live and move in the physical world by our outward acts, so that, when we die, we do not enter a world of which we have had no experience, but in a more complete manner, as free from earthly limitations, into a world in which we have lived already.

We are forced, then, by feeling that our virtuous will must have results, and by the fact that it has only a small number of results in this world, to believe in a spiritual world in which the will, being itself spiritual, finds its true ends fulfilled. That is the first step in the argument for immortality, after the act of faith of which I spoke has been freely chosen by the will.

The second step carries us on to the truth of Immortality.

When I conceive of my will to do right having *necessary* results in a spiritual world, I conceive of a law as ruling in that world. If the results *must be*, there must be a law by which they are necessary. To that law I am connected by moral obedience, and

because it annexes fixed results to virtuous volition in me and in all men, it is above and beyond our wills. In it all our finite wills are held, and to it they all are subject. But since the world in which this law is, is not the world of sense, but a spiritual world in which will acts, the law of that world cannot be like that which we call a law here, a mere expression of antecedents and sequences, a mere statement of the way in which things are; it must be a living law; it must be self-active reason; it must be a will.

And it is a Will—the Will from whom all human wills have flowed, to which all human wills are related, in whom all human wills have being; the only self-existent, the only unchangeable, the only infinite Will, of whom and by whom and through whom are all things —God invisible, eternal, absolute, to whom be glory for ever and ever. The voice I hear in my heart, and to which I willed to give obedience, and whose reality I believed at first, I know now was His voice. My will, which determined to obey that voice, was urged thereto by this infinite Will. My will is related to Him, and in Him must have results in the whole spiritual world which exists in Him and by Him. And this which is true of me is true of all my fellow-men. As the will of each is contained and sustained by Him, and has its own special results in Him, He becomes the spiritual bond of union which unites me to all the race; we all together share our life in Him. And because we share in His Being and He is eternal and imperishable, we also know, at last, that we are eternal and imperishable—and that, for the certainty of which our soul has

longed and cried, is a reality. We are immortal. Death, as we call it, may touch our sensible vesture, but it is only a vesture which decays. Our being goes on in another life, for we live in His Life, and our true world is not this world. 'We look for a city which hath foundations.' We abide in Him and He in us, and He abides for ever.

The parallel, in fact, between the two lines of argument, is exact. The natural philosopher having put in, either at the beginning, or in the process of his work, a belief in the existence of Force, which is a belief in an outward world, finds that which he was driven to assume confirmed at every step of his enquiry. He cannot understand a number of facts except on the ground that Force is a reality to him, and he leaves aside, as unpractical in his work, the question as to whether it has only an existence in Thought. His theory of Force explains by far the greater part of natural phenomena, and is contradicted by none. He returns then to his starting-point, and says, 'That which I originally believed without proof, is true. Force is a real existence.'

Precisely in the same way we prove that the reality of Duty, which we willed to believe—and which, seen as we saw it, (not as something developed by the slow action of social circumstances, but as a command independent of our own thought and coming to us from without,) necessarily inferred a spiritual world, and God, and Immortality—is an absolute reality. It and its necessary results, which together form our theory of the Universe of Spirit, solve the greater part of the moral

and spiritual problems of life, and are not distinctly contradicted by any.

But it may be said that the analogy is not exact. For though Force or the physical world is proved to have a real existence *to us*, it is not proved to have an independent existence, and some scientific men are in doubt on that question. All Force, they say, may be nothing more than Will—Will-Force. Moreover, though the supposition of its existence explains most of the phenomena we know, that does not necessarily infer that it has any existence independent of Thought. We have no right, then, an objector may say, to infer, because our theory of the universe of Spirit explains the moral and spiritual phenomena of human life and its history, the actual existence of Duty, of a spiritual world, of God, and of Immortality. We can only infer their existence in Thought.

Only their existence in Thought! In what else should they exist, and what existence can be more absolute? We ask no more. For taking the ground of those scientific men who think that Force is Will, they think no more than we wish them to think, that there is a Will, and therefore a Thought, in whom the Universe is. In thinking thus, they grant God, and the real existence of all things in Him. In thinking thus, the physical world is no less a reality to them, but more. The question whether it have independent existence or not does not touch their work, nor will their work on that account be of less moment for ever and ever, for the principles of the order of this apparent world will be always the same in any other apparent world, however

different from this, for they are fixed in God's Thought. We have a right, then, to say that the analogy fits accurately.

We assume, then, a spiritual world, or rather we assume the reality of Duty, from which we necessarily infer, as I said, a spiritual world; and when we find that the phenomena of the human conscience and spirit can be explained on that assumption, we return to our starting-point and say, 'That which we believed without proof, is true. There is an imperative beyond our thought and independent of our consciousness which we are bound to obey. The moment we will to obey it, we are conscious that it must have results, and, on further thought, that these results can only be fully realised in a world in which Will and Thought alone exist, and therefore in a spiritual, not a material world. And granting these things, our will to do right, and a world in which Will and Thought alone exist, we are forced to infer One whose Will is absolutely good, and who contains in His Will our will, and in His self-active Reason and Will, which are His personality, our personality; One therefore who is Eternal Life, and the life of all, the only pure Being, in whom all Being is. And lastly, we are driven with joy to feel and know, that if Duty, and a spiritual world, and God, be truths, Immortality must also be a Truth. If we are inseparably connected with the Infinite and Eternal Will, we must ourselves be, as derived from Him, infinite and eternal.

And now, with this knowledge in our hand, we turn to our life, and find it falling into perfect order. We

know whence we have come and whither we are going. We know the end of all our brother-men and the necessary end of all this struggle of Man. Problem after problem is solved — difficulty after difficulty vanishes away; and if some things remain obscure, we know that we have but to wait, and our key will unlock them, when we are able to bear the revelation. Peace enters our heart, the peace which comes of certain knowledge. We know and rest in the infinite meaning of the Saviour's saying: 'God is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.'

IMMORTALITY.

'For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.'—Luke xx. 38.

No one can help feeling, at this time of the year, a forecasting of decay. The melancholy skies, the naked trees, the heavy smell of rotting leaves, the hateful atmosphere, tell their own story. And influenced as we are through blood and bone by the elements which surround us, and by the memories of brighter weather, the spring of life relaxes, and our thoughts take the colour of decay.

As it is year after year, is it so for man after man? Time goes on, but past years do not live again. The flower-life goes on, but not the same flowers. And does mankind go on, but not men? Have we each our spring, our summer, our rich and swiftly miserable autumn, our winter of death, and never another spring? This is the thought of many at this time. The race continues, but the individual perishes. Death is personal annihilation.

Last Sunday we gave some reasons for the prevalence of this thought among natural philosophers; to-day we begin by giving some reasons for its prevalence in other classes of society, and pass on to consider the

reasonableness or not of annihilation: meaning by annihilation not, of course, the destruction of the elements of which our body is composed, but the resolution into those elements of all that we call thought, feeling, will, and self-consciousness.

The reasons of the prevalence of this opinion vary with different types of men and their different lives. It arises in some from the intensity of youthful ardour, when it has been overstrained. They have been so full of life that they have drawn upon it too much, and drained the source dry. Weary, exhausted, yet still desirous to find the old enjoyment, they are tossed between desire and weakness to fulfil desire, till at last the only comfort seems to be to look forward to an eternal sleep. 'Why should the vital torment of life be renewed?' they ask, forgetting that it is torment because life has been misused, not knowing that life is vital joy when it is used with temperance.

It arises in others, and these chiefly business men, from the disease of unceasing work. One of the things which is acting worst on English society is that a number of men have got into that state in which recreation is impossible. All the year round, from morning to night, they pursue their trade or their profession without a single break, except their heavy after-dinner sleep. Even in dreams they hunt their work, like dogs. This is also a misuse of life. All joy is taken out of it, beauty has no place in its foggy realm; even love resolves itself into a dull desire to provide for one's children. The world is not their oyster which they open, they are the oysters of the

world. And when they are deaf and blind to all the loveliness and passion and movement of life, what wonder if, having become machines, they do not care to run on for ever?

It arises in the case of a number of cultivated young men from the depression of failure. Within the last ten years there has been in the universities an atmosphere, almost tropical, of refined culture and scholarship, and in it a number of intellects and imaginations have been forced, till they are, for the most part, unfitted to do the rough work of the world. Educated, then, up to the point at which they fully comprehend and passionately feel the great things which men possessing genius have done, it seems to them, by a very common instinct, that they can either do the same or at least that they have a right to try. Hence we have the deluge of second and third-rate painters, poets, novelists, critics, and the rest, with which England is now overspread. They begin with hope and joy, and after a little deserved applause for the passing pleasure they have given, mankind, whose judgment soon gets right, drops them, and they feel with bitterness that though they have won something, it is not their ideal, and moreover, that they can *never* reach their ideal. The applause does not deceive them, they are too well educated not to see, when the first excitement of production is over and they look at the work to which they have given their best powers, that they have failed. Disgust of life ensues, a kind of passionate hatred of themselves. In that atmosphere no good work can be done, and if they try again the

inspiration which they had abandons them—it was founded on ignorance of the extent of their powers, knowledge has dispersed it: the failure is worse than before. But all this sort of work has unfitted them for ruder and more practical work. After riding on Pegasus they cannot get into the traces and pull at the common chariot of the work of the world. They cease to act, they bury themselves in their learned and artistic leisure, and all vivid life is over. The bitterness of failure leads them to utter carelessness of a life to come. Why should they renew the web which will crack from side to side again?—and the inaction in which they live takes away the desire to live again, for it takes away the food of life.

Moreover, among persons of this educated type the same thing holds good, as in the case of the scientific man who pursues nothing else but science. Devotion to art or to criticism alone, developes the faculties used to a strength out of all proportion to the rest. Not only are the spiritual powers dwindled to a thread for want of use, so that immortal life is a pretty dream, but the faculties used, being unbalanced by other important powers of our nature, are not capable of forming a just judgment. Criticism, in discussing matters such as the evidence for immortality, discusses it as it would the evidence for the existence of an early and unimportant myth. It begins by supposing it is not true; it leaves out all the spiritual phenomena which, in the history of the human heart, have accompanied faith in it; it treats a question which belongs, by the hypothesis, to the realm of intellect and the spirit, as if it were a question

of the pure intellect alone. On the face of it, nothing can be more absurd—as absurd as the late discussion into which one of our philosophers enters, with regard to a mother's love for a child, on physiological grounds alone. It is plain in this case that the critical powers have become so abnormally developed as to vitiate the purity of judgment.

On the other hand, the mere æsthetic life tends equally to a belief in annihilation. A somewhat stern and energetic manliness is needed in the character of a highly educated man before he can look forward with joy to living for ever. Increase of knowledge and increased sensitiveness of feeling increase the pain of living, and though they also increase its joy, yet we begin to fear joy, for we know the reaction which follows it. 'Can we bear,' we ask, 'going on with this struggle for ever?' Yes, we can, but only when we are possessed by the noblest and the strongest ideas, when we enter into the struggle as men who are resolved not to retreat a single step. Slowly, then, as we grow through long battle into veteran warriors, we feel, not the languid pleasure in beauty, but the glorious joy of the war for right: and to live for ever becomes the first desire of life, for we know that it means life in union with eternal Goodness, Truth, and Love.

This sort of manliness the exclusively æsthetic life does not cherish but enfeebles. It produces a soft, rather mournful, habit of mind: it unnerves the more active powers, it makes men shrink from the clash of life; its devotion to beauty, for beauty's sake alone, blurs the sharpness of the lines which divide right and

wrong: everything which charms the senses, provided the charm be a delicate one, is lovely, and whether it is morally lovely or not is a secondary consideration. Pain, therefore, disease, strong effort, the struggle of doubt, the labour to find answers to great problems, such as this of immortality, become bitter and distressful; and in absolute seeking after and finding of the beautiful here, in exquisite enjoyment of it when found, and in exquisite regret of it when it can be no more enjoyed, all hope, nay, all possibility of enjoying another life than the present, passes away, and life becomes in youth a passionate desire to get all the joy and beauty possible before old age comes, and in old age a wailing memory of past delight, and a sorrowful waiting in as much quiet as possible for the everlasting sleep. 'Why enter another world? No other world can be lovelier that this; and if I may not have this, I do not care for another.'

The reasons why many working-men reject immortality I have spoken of elsewhere, but there is one reason common to them and to many educated men. It is that we are living in a revolutionary period of thought, and the very fact that any opinion is an old one is enough to subject it to attack. Now, in the general revolt against things accredited by custom, not only is the orthodox faith involved, but also beliefs which, though included in Christianity, are older than it. Among these is the belief in immortality. We are doubting now the doctrine that the ancient Persian, Hindoo, and Hebrew clung to, that Cicero and Plato rejoiced in holding, that the Maho-

metan does not dream of denying. It seems as if on this subject modern society were going back into the old savage, or into even a less noble condition, for I suppose no man in hours of sober judgment has any doubt as to the nobleness of the idea of immortality, and the degradation involved in the idea of annihilation. But the truth is that a vast deal of the denial of the former among the working-classes and among the young men and women of the upper classes is not owing to any thought being expended on the subject, but simply to the revolutionary impulse in them. 'The thing is old, let us get rid of it. The conservative feeling supports it; everything which conservatism supports we attack: let us have something new.' And it is not unamusing—if we put the religious feeling about it aside—to watch the self-conscious audacity with which people try to awake one's astonishment, and really awake one's pity, by airing in society their faith in annihilation, as if to believe in it were not intellectually and morally a miserable business.

One would despair of the progress of mankind if one thought that this would last. But revolutionary periods end by finding a new channel for their waters, and though the exhausted ideas of the past perish in the whirlpool, the noble ideas live and flow on with the new waters. We are now in a kind of backwater of the great river of Progress, and spinning round and round in a confusion of eddies and efforts to get on. When we have found our fresh thoughts and got them clear, we shall get out of the backwater with a rush, and stream on in that which I like better than revolu-

tion—steady movement, aware of itself, to distinctly recognised ends. But at present everyone is naturally dissatisfied with the want of purpose, of clear aims, of any coherent ideas in social, political, religious, and artistic life. And the dissatisfaction shows itself chiefly in all matters which belong to the realm of art, for in art one always finds the more subtile aspects of any society reflected. Our more modern poets and painters find nothing calm or perfect enough in modern life to represent. They go back out of the present to the past; they tell us stories and paint us scenes from the old Greek and Mediæval life. They try to recover the dead motives of a dead life, and a whole school has sprung up, both in poetry and on canvass, which possesses much charm, but which is essentially mournful and retrograde, which smells of musk and ambergris, whose passion is more that of exhausted feeling trying by morbid means to sting itself into joy than the frank and healthy passion of youth, whose notes are not native to English soil, and whose work does not smack of the fresh air, nor seem done face to face with nature, but smells of scented rooms, lit up with artificial light.

Our art has been driven from the present to the past, and those who enjoy and love it, naturally cease to feel interest in the future; the whole tone of feeling it encourages tends to lessen the care for and the belief in a life to come.

But this cannot last; the present is always too strong for the past, and art, and philosophy, and literature, and with them educated society, will emerge from this backwater when modern life finds clear aims, and

flow on in new channels. Active life in the present will then produce art and literature to represent it, and the interest in the present will make the future so interesting, that the tendency to believe in immortality will take to itself fresh life. By that time Christianity—I mean our present form of it, which is also in this revolutionary stage of confusion, changing old opinions for new—will also have refitted itself to the higher thoughts and wants of men; and its doctrine of immortality, freed from the low ideas with which it has been surrounded by a dying theology, present once more to men, longing again to live for ever because they have found a vital present, a glorious ideal to which they can aspire with joy.

For, after all, what is at the root of this belief in annihilation? It is that our theology has been for some years presenting to us an idea of God wholly inadequate to our present intellectual and moral conceptions, and an idea of man which we now reject as ignoble, and as untrue because ignoble. Not that this idea of God was inadequate to past society, or that idea of man ignoble. They were then as high as most men could receive, though we always find a few who protested against them, and rose above the common level. But thought on these subjects is now up to that of the higher spirits of the past, and theology must rise to the moral and intellectual level of the present before immortality can be a universal faith again.

An adequate idea of God, a noble idea of man, these are the ideas which, reintroduced into theology, will bring back the belief in immortality, for they will render

the theory of annihilation intellectually as well as morally absurd.

The common notion of God divides His being from the universe and from mankind. It is so afraid of being called pantheistic, that it forgets the truth which is in pantheism. If nature and mankind are, as a whole or in any of their parts, capable of being truly severed from God, so that the one runs along like a machine which may run down, or that in the other, one soul can, by becoming eternally evil, be eternally divided from the Godhead, then God cannot be considered absolute nor all-comprehending nor all-powerful for good. There are points at which His power fails, His goodness retires from the field, points at which He is forced to struggle, and the possibility of inferring these things from the orthodox idea of God is surely inconsistent with the idea of Him which we feel *now* that we ought to possess. It is really less than we can conceive, and for us to worship it any longer is idolatry. We must have an adequate idea of God, and till we get it into theology, a great number of men who think deeply will be atheists, and necessarily disbelievers in immortality.

Again, owing to this uncultivated notion of a God who sits apart, at a distance from us, we are forced to assume another great power in the universe. If any one of us, or any thing, can have, or retain being, apart from Him, then there must be another source of being than His. And, practically speaking, that is what is held. The artist talks of nature, the philosopher of law, the theologian of the devil, and we have a dual

government of the world, in which God tends to become more and more a remote and misty phantom.

Now, I say if we believe in a God at all, that the only adequate conception of Him which will satisfy our intellect and heart alike, is one which conceives of Him as the sole self-existing Being and of everything and everyone as having Being only in His Being. The life of the universe, of matter and spirit, is *one life* —the Life of God infinitely conditioned in and through a myriad forms. There is not a shred of the world called the world of nature which is not held in Him, and is not, indeed, His thought. We all *are*, only because we are in Him and part of His being, our personality held in His personality. Do not call this pantheism. It may be pantheism, but it is something more than pantheism. It is not saying the universe is God, it is saying God is the universe and something more than the universe. It is the doctrine which S. Paul inferred from the old Greek poet: 'In Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring.' It is the doctrine of S. Paul himself: 'Of Him, and by Him, and through Him are all things;' and the moment we fully conceive that He alone *is*, and that nothing is which is not He, it becomes intellectually absurd that any soul should go out as a candle. Once having been, once having had consciousness, once having had personality, it is impossible to lose being, consciousness, and personality. That which is in God, in eternal Being, cannot perish.

But it is *not* intellectually absurd when God's existence is denied, and to this conclusion men come who

think of what they mean by annihilation. They know that the denial of immortality irresistibly infers atheism, that if there is Eternal Being, those who have issued from that Being and have their being in Him must be immortal: we cannot think the one without thinking the other. And I want those who so lightly talk of man dying for ever to clearly understand either that they are talking nonsense, if they confess a God, or that they are logically driven into atheism.

For not only is the notion of annihilation of personality—that is, of our consciousness, will, and character—intellectually absurd in face of an adequate intellectual conception of God, it is also morally absurd in face of an adequate moral conception of God.

But the fact is that it is not morally absurd to many of us, because we have no adequate moral conception of God. The moral inadequacy of our thought of God is chiefly in this, that we accept a teaching which thinks of Him as having no duties to His children. We are told that He has a Sovereign's right to do what He likes with us, and that we have no business to judge as to the right and wrong of His actions.

I deny that at once on the ground already laid down, that our being is held in God's being, and therefore that what is truth and justice and love to us is the same in kind in us as in God, and that it is absurd to think otherwise. But as these teachers do think otherwise, they go on to infer that things which would seem unjust if done by a man are not unjust if done by God. We are told that He creates us to damn us, or leaves us alone to ruin ourselves, or that He allows us

to be children of the devil, things so absolutely immoral in an earthly father, that we are driven either into a state of blind submission in which intellect is destroyed and the moral sense utterly confused, or into absolute revolt, or into a kind of hopeless drifting carelessness of the whole matter. And in the last state of mind are those who still cling by old custom to belief in God and immortality, but who have no real pleasure or interest in their belief, in whom it produces no result.

Now, such a want of vital faith is due to a mean conception of their own moral nature following on a mean conception of God's moral nature. 'He has left me to myself,' they say; 'nay, more, I am told that I am vile and worthless spiritually, that my nature is utterly corrupt. If I am so bad,' they go on, 'why should I care what becomes of me? If my nature is corrupt throughout, what is the use of aspiring to be better?—nay, I do not believe in my aspirations: am I not told that they themselves are wicked?' This is the way they have argued long ago. Now they have ceased to trouble themselves about the matter, but the result of the argument remains as an unconscious influence below the surface of their life, and the effect is a total loss of interest in immortality, amounting to practical disbelief of it.

All this is done away with by a true moral conception of God in His relation to us, based on the moral ideas which we possess ourselves from Him. He has sent us forth from Himself, therefore He is bound to be, we feel, in the highest conceivable sense a Father

to us, and He is our Father. We can never, then, be separated from Him, never let alone by Him, never shut up by Him in eternal evil. Our Being has come direct from His, and is now in His Being, therefore our nature can never be utterly vile. Our aspirations are His voice in us; our justice, truth, and love, such as they are, are still the same in kind as His.

He is pure moral Being: therefore—since we cannot divide ourselves from Him and since He is bound as a Father to educate us—we must reach in the end pure moral being.

It is thus that from an adequate moral conception of God we arrive at the second thing I said we wanted to restore to us the belief in immortality—an adequate conception of man. We are inseparably united to pure intellectual and moral Being, and in that union we are great, and do great things of the brain and of the spirit.

And now, in conclusion, taking both of these things together—the greatness of man in God, and the absolute morality of God, which we now know is in kind the same as ours—let us see if annihilation be not morally absurd, if the being of God be granted.

Of course I shall speak in what follows of good men, and it will be said that the argument does not prove that the wicked will not be annihilated. But I have already spoken of this question in previous sermons, and I hold that the destruction of the wicked is morally and logically impossible if there be a God who is the only self-existing Being, and if He be a moral Being. It is a question of redemption beyond

this earth, but the present argument deals with the question as it lies before us in this world.

No one can deny, who is not prejudiced by the low theological view of our nature, that it is capable of greatness of character. In every age there have been men who have forgotten self for the sake of right and truth and for a noble cause, even though the self-forgetfulness meant death; men whose glory shines with the serene light of stars in the sky which arches over history. Others, too, have been, whose path has lain apart from fame, the quiet martyrs of self-surrender, who have died to the joys of life for the sake of others' joy, or borne in the eloquent silence of resignation bitter pain and grief.

And has all that perished for them? Has the noble effort and the faithful life been in vain for those who lived it? Are they only to live in our memory and love, but they themselves 'to be blown about the desert dust or sealed within the iron hills'? It revolts all our moral feeling if we believe in a moral God. Either there is no God, whose children we are, or the denial of immortality is absurd. There is nothing between atheism and immortality.

And that infinite thirst of knowledge we possess, that power of thought which sweeps us beyond the world of sense and time; that inexhaustible activity of imagination by which we create new worlds; our passionate cry for the rest which lies in harmony of nature; our desire for fuller life when life is filled with great thoughts and pure and passionate love of man; that yearning of the spirit for freedom from sin and for union with truth;

that ceaseless cry for more light; our delight in reverencing something better than ourselves, in ideal excellence; our intense sensibility to beauty and sublimity in nature—have these no final cause if God exists? Did He give us these powers of intellect and heart and spirit—powers which draw their fire from the fire of His eternal Thought and Will—only to resume them into Himself, to lure us on to work and then to quench our light; to make our hopes our hell, our noblest longings our deepest misery; to extinguish our exhaustless effort and curiosity in the degradation of an eternal sleep? Did He give us that love of the ideal, that delight in beauty, that tearful interest in His universe, only to make the grave and the wretched dust of our corruption the vain and miserable end? Has He written His scorn on all our aspirations after truth and light and holiness? Does He smile with contemptuous pity when men's hearts go up to Him in praise for the freshness and radiance of the spring? It is incredible. Either the atheist is right, or that immortality is untrue is absurd.

Look, too, at our triumph over death. When decay usurps the powers, and memory and life slip from us like a dream, it is then that our inner being most often rises into beauty and victory. And when the last act of the man is the assertion of his immortality, does the Lord of Righteousness contradict him in contempt? Is the spirit on the verge of its greatest loss at its very noblest moment of gain? does it reach with faithful effort, and thrilled with divine hope, the mountain peak, only to topple over the precipice of

annihilation? Then those who believe in God are the real fools of the world.

Our soul swells with reverence and love for those who held life as nothing in comparison with truthfulness to right; our soul is full of a sad condemnation of those who prefer to live when life is infamous; and yet if annihilation be true, God despises the nobility which we revere, and tacitly approves the infamy which we condemn. But this is incredible if we conceive of God as moral: it is hideous. Either, then, there is no God or annihilation is false.

Finally, it is true of a noble human life that it finds its highest enjoyment in the consciousness of progress. Our times of greatest pleasure are when we have won some higher peak of difficulty, trodden under foot some evil, refused some pleasant temptation for truth's sake, been swept out of our narrow self by love, and felt day by day, in such high labours, so sure a growth of moral strength within us, that we cannot conceive of an end of growth.

And when all that is most vigorous within us, does God—pure moral Being—does God say No? Is that insatiable delight in progress given to the insect of an hour? Does there seem to be a Spirit who leads us through life, conquering the years in us, redeeming us from all evil, bringing in us calm out of sorrow, faith out of doubt, strength out of trial; and when He has made us great of spirit like Himself, does He bury all that wealth of heart in nothingness?

What incredible thing is this?—only credible if there be no God.

'MELENCOLIA.'

'For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.'—Eccles. i. 18.

The first impulse of many, on hearing this text, would be to give it a blunt contradiction. In their opinion, to increase knowledge is to increase pleasure, and their opinion is true. The pleasure of a thousand associations which wake pity, and kindle enthusiasm, and adorn the meanest place in which a great action has been done, is the reward of the historian's knowledge. The pleasure of discovery, of confirming theory by fact, of recreating the past earth and peopling its plains with life—if these accompany the common walk of one who knows even a little of natural philosophy, what deeper pleasures are his lot whose extensive knowledge can correlate the facts of many different spheres of science, and so harmonise the universe?

The pleasure of recognising the truth in the creations of great poets, of seeing into the secret springs of human action; of a fine and subtile tolerance, of playing on the hearts of men, of making society musical by bringing out of different temperaments accordant tones; of giving sympathy and directing help aright —these are the delights which come of a fine knowledge

of the human heart. In every region of man's activity, he that increaseth knowledge increaseth pleasure.

But is this the whole account of the matter? We may contradict the text as we please, but we do not in reality contradict it by asserting its opposite; we only complete it by asserting its other half. Both statements are half-truths. The whole truth of the thing is only found in the assertion of both. He that increaseth knowledge increaseth pleasure, and—increaseth sorrow.

For in this world, pleasure and sorrow are two sisters who never live very far apart. Every pleasure which comes to the surface of the lake of life has had its own sorrow born with it in the depths below. Sooner or later, it too will come to the surface, and the blood-red lily of pain will replace the sunny lily of pleasure.

Knowledge and toil are the sources of joy, but they are also the sources of sorrow.

This is what Albert Dürer saw and engraved in his subtile print of 'Melencolia.' All of you are probably acquainted with it, and I take it with the passage in Ecclesiastes as my text, for the key-note of the whole is, he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.

This would be especially true, in the artist's time, of those who were attempting to penetrate into the secrets of the physical world. For the true methods of scientific investigation had not been found; and though the alchemist and the natural philosopher, whose instruments are seen in the engraving, lit upon discoveries which seemed to open vistas of knowledge, they could not apply them, much less generalise them. At the end of a long life of work, they were no further than before;

the knowledge they had won served only to tantalise them.

The opening soliloquy of the great German poem may well express the intolerable melancholy which seized on all physical students of that time—the bitter consciousness of their fruitless work, their hopeless incapacity to know.

We are freed from that grief, for we are consciously advancing, having found true methods. But Dürer must have met many who had worn out their life, and sometimes their brain, in the service of the crucible. But the same profound pain besets us in the science of metaphysics and of theology, and for the same reason—the want of true methods. Many a thinker who has spent life in passionate labour to solve the problems of the soul, is seized, when the energy of the brain begins to fail, with the biting sorrow which is born of fruitless labour.

But the sorrow which we describe is never, when the man is true, a base, but a noble one. And so, Dürer's lonely figure, the genius of the labour and knowledge of the earth, is crowned with the laurel and winged with the mighty pens of thought and imagination.

Nor is this sorrow felt at all times, but at intervals when labour and thought are, for a time, forgotten, and in a moment of pause unconscious meditation sets in. It is the attitude of *arrested thought* in which the seated figure reposes, her cheek upon her hand, her compass idle, her book unread, her instruments scattered idly at her feet, her keys unused, her very wolf-hound, sym-

pathising with her mood in his own way, fast asleep; her eyes gazing into the void.

Such moments are not unknown to us, when the pen drops, or the spade falls from the hand, or the analysis is forgotten, and in an instant we float away upon that vague ocean of questioning thought whose depths no sounding-line of ours has ever fathomed. Everyone knows that the atmosphere of these pauses is that of a noble melancholy.

Now, what, in the artist's imagination, were the subtile sadnesses which characterised such a moment? We may guess at them by the symbols which he places round his figure. But they are many: on one only and what it suggests we speak to-day. Dürer has expressed the one certainty in this world of uncertainty, the demonstrative certainty of the science of numbers, in the four-square tablet fixed above the winged genius in the wall of the house, all the sixteen squares of which contain a number. Whether one adds up these numbers horizontally, vertically, or diagonally, they have the same result.

Now the melancholy which arises from the vague answers which we can only suggest to many of our deepest questions is made greater by the clear answers which our questions receive in science. Distinctness in one sphere seems to suggest with a mocking irony that distinctness might be reached in all, *if* we had power. We have wings then, but we have the misery of knowing that they are not strong enough. The more we know, the greater becomes the number of things we have to harmonise, the deeper our conviction that we

see through a glass, darkly. One certainty makes all our uncertainties more painful, but it makes tenfold more painful the uncertainties of the world of the spirit. The things of the profoundest interest, the existence of God and what is His relation to us; the reality of immortality; the meaning of evil, the use of sorrow; what we are, whether 'the cunningest clock in the universe,' or a living will and spirit, free to act upon and change the world around us—these things we cannot demonstrate; often we float between belief and unbelief of them, as we float ourselves between life and death. It is our sincerest sorrow that the things we want most in our most earnest moments, we know least about, accurately; and the things we want least, we are best acquainted with.

In another way also the increase of scientific knowledge increases sorrow. It gives pleasure to those in the sphere of that knowledge; it increases the sorrow of many who are not within that sphere. For the solution of many scientific problems has set before theologians and many Christian men who love the old opinions in which they have been brought up, new difficulties in their region, new troubles for their early faith. The unknitting of one enigma is often the knitting together of a hundred elsewhere. Peace made in one sphere of knowledge is often war made in another. The suffering caused among thousands by scientific discoveries is a real suffering.

Therefore, as Christ's minister, I would ask scientific men to remember this, and to be tolerant, if those whom they touch so rudely cry out. It is not from anger

they cry out so much as from pain. I ask for the gentleness of superior knowledge, for some feeling that the scientific sphere of thought does not include all the interests of men; for such thought of the suffering they give to the weak as will lead them to explain how, in their opinion, their discoveries bear upon matters of faith. If the leaders of science in England will only explain their position and try to understand that of the theologians, omitting a few sneers which for the time reduce them to the level of their violent opponents, they will do a real good. I do not want the slightest relaxation in any effort to find truths, nor the slightest hesitation in expounding them, because of the suffering they may inflict. If a thousand old beliefs were ruined in our march to truth, we must still march on. But I ask scientific men to do their spiriting gently, or, as I should say, in the spirit of Christ; severe to Pharisaism, but kind to weakness and ignorance; not too ready to find Pharisaism everywhere nor to expect too much of others, but presuming that many have as much real difficulty in accepting their propositions as they would have in accepting those of the orthodox.

On the other hand, I claim tolerance for the natural philosophers from the orthodox. The increase of their knowledge is to many scientific men an increase of sorrow, for it brings with it isolation from the ranks of faith. They are the servants and soldiers of physical truth, and they are devoted to their mistress. I know that they would suffer martyrdom as readily and as firmly as any of the Christian martyrs rather than deny their faith. I know that their sacrifice of wealth and

of the world to the pursuit of truth would put to shame the life of many a religious boaster. One need but mention Faraday to prove this. All the world knows the sacrifices he made for the sake of science.

But they are often forced to put forward truths which conflict with orthodox views. A cry is at once raised against them, and they are forced into an attitude of opposition. Their highest duty, the discovery of truth, is made their greatest sin. They cannot cease their work without being guilty of the worst possible falsehood—yet this devotion is made the means of isolating them, the source of accusations which, if true, would separate them altogether from the realm of spiritual, even of imaginative feeling. I claim for them in the name of Christ grateful consideration. Some of them feel keenly their enforced isolation ; and the scorn and hard speaking, and sometimes the touch of bravado in the tone of others, have their roots in the want of thought and want of charity with which they have been met.

Thus not only does the increase of knowledge increase the sorrow which comes with the fresh statement of theological problems, but it also increases, at present, the division between religious and scientific men. The proper remedy for this last sorrowful thing is the extension of the spirit of Christ's love. If men were to believe and hope the best of one another, if men strove to understand each other, we might hope for a quicker reconciliation between science and religion.

But, resuming our main thread of thought, what is the remedy for the sadness of increased uncertainty

which growing knowledge has added to spiritual problems? The remedy is plainly stated in the New Testament. But let us see if we cannot approach the New Testament statement from the side of scientific practice, and so strengthen its force.

The certainties of science are mixed up also with uncertainties. Beyond what is known extends a belt of shadow land, over which the clouds lift and fall. To say nothing of the fact that many of the assumed theories of science are not and probably never can be demonstrated, there are points in all the sciences where intellect at present fails and where investigation has no further materials. The cloud settles down; the questions, eagerly put, remain unsolved. Towards these uncertainties what is the practice and the attitude of men of science? It is, first—I put it in Scripture words—that of men who possess a 'faith which worketh by love.' They believe in truth, and their faith works through love of truth. Nature may seem to err, seem to contradict herself, but she does neither the one nor the other. It is we who are, they say, blind, defective, ignorant. But if we are faithful to truth and love it; if we do not relax our questioning, we shall be rewarded by finding truth; and if we are not, we shall have prepared the way for others. It is not only in the spiritual world but also in the scientific that the words of Christ are true. 'Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.'

So, though there is a sadness of science born of uncertainty, it is a noble sadness. It is felt only in moments when work is suddenly suspended; and the

effect it has is not despairing, but inspiring. It is a sadness which does not last long enough to cripple energy or to pass into despair. It stings, on the contrary, into activity, and its legitimate child is hope. It is a sadness which has wings, and is crowned with the foliage of spring. For it has faith in truth which works by love of truth.

Well, what has been the result of this kind of work spread over many years? The swiftest and the safest success! In other spheres, then, and in a different meaning, this text is true, 'This is the victory which overcometh the world; even our faith.' Not credulity, remember, not trust in authority as such, but faith in ultimate order: the two highest expressions of which faith in the case of the physical philosopher are, first, patience in investigation and reticence of decision—for 'he that believeth shall not make haste;' and, secondly, systematic scepticism, till absolute demonstration is effected; for the moment a physical philosopher is so enamoured of his theory as to consider it proved before it is proved, he is punished by being rendered blind to new light.

In every way this is a lesson which we would do well to learn. We are surrounded with uncertainties belonging to the sphere of the spirit. We have enough light up to a certain point—enough to walk by; beyond that, the cloud settles down. We put question after question; each one has its own nest of difficulties, and out of the calm heavens no answer is at once vouchsafed. Nothing is more astonishing to me than the way in which people expect, and even claim, that their

spiritual enigmas should at once be resolved without any trouble on their part, without any work, without any investigation. They build up theories of theology and explain all things by their theories; but they do not take the pains to bring their theories face to face with the facts of spiritual life. They are precisely in the same position towards a true science of the spirit that the old scholastic philosophers were towards a true science of nature. Suddenly their theory is forced into contact with a spiritual fact—the revolt, for example, of the moral sense of men against the punishment of the innocent as an adequate satisfaction for the sin of the guilty—and then the whole theory breaks up into fragments, and they either cling blindly to it in passionate anger, or they are plunged into the despair of eternal night. They become fanatics or infidels. Their dark anger, and their melancholy hopelessness, are alike ignoble. But for the large class who are not slaves to theories but touched now and then with the melancholy born of uncertainty, what is the remedy?

It is the same in principle as that of the natural philosopher. It is faith in God which worketh by love of God. The root of our cowardice, of our hesitation, of our inactive melancholy, is our faithlessness. We are not asked *at first* to believe in certain doctrines, or in the opinions of men. We are asked to believe in Eternal Right, in a Father of spirits whose will is good. This is the first and foremost step. And belief in this Being is not credulity, nor is it founded on mere authority. It is based on the moral intuitions, it becomes a moral certainty to many by the way it has

answered the personal difficulties of the soul in daily experience, by the way in which it has supported the soul in trial, enabled it to conquer evil and grow in good during the long struggle of a lifetime: it draws to itself proof after proof by the explanations which it has given in the past to the spiritual difficulties of the race. If, then, we believe in absolute goodness, truth, justice, and love in God, why are we idle, indifferent, fearful, or ignobly sad, always complaining of the unintelligible world? Our faith should be a working quality, working through love of perfect right. Then, when we find evil in the world, apparent contradictions of love, apparent violations of justice, apparent cruelties, darkness where we most hoped and expected clear light, we do not accuse God any more than the philosophers accuse nature. We accuse ourselves: we are defective, we say, blind, ignorant. Some evil has set us wrong, our nature has got twisted. Let us recognise our want and seek the remedy, let us set our wrong right, cure ourselves of our evil; feeling sure that, if we seek the Righteous One, He is bound by His nature to help us. For if we be faithful to God, and love Him, if we go on working, and questioning, striving and experimenting, asking, asking, in the prayer of action in accordance with what we know for certain is right, we shall be rewarded by the slow dissipation of uncertainties. I do not say that all uncertainties will be cleared away, for that would mean our perfection. But enough will be dispersed to enable us to work with hope, to fill us with a vital certainty of future attainment; enough to induce us to keep the torch of effort alight, and to hand

it on with assurance to the seekers for truth who follow us.

It is true we are not altogether freed from melancholy, but it is no longer what it was. We still fall, when life pauses and we are weary, into the meditative melancholy of which we have spoken, but it is the noble melancholy which urges us to labour, and is, in fact, that passing passiveness of thought in which exhaustion is repaired and new force stored up for toil. For, he who is instinct with love of God, and rooted in faith in God, cannot rest in sadness till sadness becomes weakness and hopelessness. His own thought 'drives him like a goad.' He springs once more into the doing of justice, love, and truth, and as he does these things the dawn grows brighter in the sky, the morning comes, and his life, at last, is flooded with the sunshine of belief that all is well. His faith has overcome the lazy, faithless, lifeless, fearful spirit of the world.

Lastly. This is not a faith in the commandments and doctrines of men. It is a faith in Eternal Love. It is not a blind credulity; it is a faith which the man has proved in adversity, and by which he has conquered. It is not a faith which reposes on authority; it is a faith which, as it developes, he finds answer one question after another. It is not a faith which hurries to its end and is indignant if a spiritual difficulty is not solved immediately; it is a faith which has learnt something of the slowness with which God educates the race, and therefore will not rashly make a theory, and say, This, and this only, is the solution. It is a patient and reticent faith; it is, if I may use the word, a sceptical,

that is, an enquiring faith, which is not satisfied with the light it has, but ever on the watch for brighter light; it holds to all opinions and theories slightly, being ready to surrender them for higher truth. It is satisfied to clothe itself for the time being in existing formulæ, so long as they help it forward, but always sceptical of their enduring worth, because it is *not* sceptical of progress; a faith, therefore, which no revolution in religious thought, no change in religious opinion, no new discovery in any other sphere of truth which seems to conflict with its truth for a time, can ever shake or paralyse. Nay, it expects these revolutions, for it believes in progressive revelation. It does not believe that all truth has been disclosed, and stagnate in that thought. It believes in a Father who is guiding the world into the whole of truth, not fixing the world down to a truth.

This is the true method of seeking into the mysteries of the spiritual world, and it is a method strictly analogous to that used by the natural philosopher who seeks into the mysteries of the physical world.

Use it, and however the increase of knowledge may increase your sorrow, your sorrow under its influence will be noble while it lasts—invigorating, not depressing. It will kindle you into the action of faith and love, and in action it will be transmuted into joy.

'MELENCOLIA.'

'For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.'—Eccles. i. 18.

In speaking of this text last Sunday, we considered only the sorrow which may arise from the increase of scientific knowledge, and its remedy. We found that the idea of the German artist in his plate of 'Melencolia' was at the root of the whole question. In moments of quiet thought, when, as is the case with Dürer's great Genius of Knowledge and Toil, we are suddenly arrested and pass into the region of speculative questioning, the contrast between the possibility of demonstrating truth, for example, in the science of numbers, and the impossibility of demonstrating the truth, for example, of immortality, weaves a subtile sadness for our souls.

But there are other causes for melancholy; and it is interesting to see what the Nuremberg artist says about them. The great genius, for I must repeat the description, sits in an hour of pause from labour, her head resting on her hand, looking forth in resolute but infinite sadness of thought into the world of being. Her eyes see, but see nothing of the things around her; her arm rests on a great book and her

hand grasps the open compasses. The instruments of the carpenter, geometer, and alchemist lie at her feet, where also sleeps a great wolf-hound. Over her head the square window in the house is divided into sixteen squares, each filled with a number. In whatever way you add these—horizontally, vertically, or diagonally—they make the same sum, thirty-four; this, with the poised balances, expresses that scientific certainty of which we have spoken. By the side of this square hangs an hour-glass whose sands are half run, and a bell. Seated on a millstone leaning against the house, is a small winged boy with tablet and pencil. Far off, beyond the platform, the sea is seen, with castles and towns on the shore: the sun has set, and a fiery comet, whose rays fill the whole sky, menaces the world below, but over it arches a rainbow, and across it flies a bat with outstretched wings bearing a scroll, on which is written 'Melencolia.'

What did Albert Dürer mean by this? I said last Sunday that the first thing to remember in explaining the picture (which is, indeed, an illustration of my text and of the feeling of this whole book of Ecclesiastes) was that the Angel of Knowledge and Labour was represented in that hour of sudden arrest of work which comes not rarely upon our life, when carried away in a moment into the world of speculative meditation we ask ourselves, What has my labour done for others, or for me?—what is my knowledge worth? The temper of such an hour is one of melancholy. It arose, partly, as we have seen, from the contrast of one certainty with many uncertainties, and the terrible irony in that.

It arises, next, from the thought that life is too short, even for the most ardent labour, to wrest from the bosom of nature, or the ocean of the soul, a thousandth part of their secrets. Before we have, as it were, crossed the threshold of the temple of knowledge, the sands in the glass above our head are half run, and we place the bell there, in readiness to toll our requiem. Man *is* not, but is '*like* a thing of nought; his time passeth away like a shadow.' This is one of the elements of such an hour of melancholy. And it is the increase of knowledge which has given it all its serious pain. For as long as we knew little and flitted from one enjoyment of sense to another, finding all our pleasure in the excitements of mere animal being, life had no noble value in it. We wished to live, because it was pleasant to live, and when we thought of death, it was, not with the solemn melancholy of which we speak, but either with a light laugh as not realising it, or, if realising it, with a bitter anger. But as our knowledge increased, and our labour became more earnest, and we felt that there were endless capabilities in us of attaining the first and of making the second useful to man—then, in an hour of sudden and secluded thought, when we realised that our life was more than half over, that all the mighty interests, hopes, and powers which had come to us, and made existence a scene of dramatic passion, were soon to be paralysed with age and smitten with death—then, the tide of a noble melancholy floated in upon the soul. Our work rests, our books are clasped, our soul looks through our eyes far into the future. 'Death comes,'

we think; 'is all I have done for others and learnt for myself lost? Why may I not live to finish my work, to complete and round my knowledge? If death be all, then the increase of my knowledge is the increase of my sorrow.'

The remedy and the answer lie in the teaching of Christ. He has brought, it is true, upon the world, an increased dread of death, for He has deepened the sense of moral responsibility. But in deepening responsibility He has also brought upon the world an increased delight in life, because He has made life more earnest, active, and progressive. Duties which have a clear fulfilment possible, aspirations which have a true hope of being realised—these make life interesting, alive, even passionate. The first remedy, then, when the haunting thought of death comes to shroud our little term of being with melancholy, is to take up with eagerness again the duties and responsibilities of life. In doing these the sense of life, and necessarily the sense of joy, will begin again to thrill within us; things which cannot die and are gifted with the power of convincing us of their innate immortality—love, justice, truth, and purity—become ours by the doing of them, and weave their divine eternity into our being. We look to Christ, and the two sources of the melancholy of which we speak—the idea of our work perishing, the idea of a cessation of the growth of knowledge—vanish away. He died, it is true, when half the natural sands of life were run. But we see that his labour has not died with Him. It has passed as a power and life into the world. While He lived, his words and deeds were

only forcible and productive in Palestine. Now that He has passed from earth, they have pervaded nations. And our work done in his spirit has the same infinite quality. It does not cease with our breath. It lives and moves in other men. It is handed on from generation to generation in a tradition of action, accumulating force from the new human power which different men have added to it. Being done in union with the eternal humanity of Christ, it belongs to and suits developing mankind—nay, more, it developes with mankind. All we have to do is to do it now with all our heart, and soul, and strength, looking unto Jesus; and we may rejoice that not one shred of it is lost.

> Our echoes flow from soul to soul,
> And grow for ever and for ever.

Moreover, we are also freed in Christ from the second source of this sadness, the idea that our knowledge shall cease to grow. For in Him we are ourselves immortal, and the work which we have started, and left to others here, we carry on ourselves in the larger world beyond. But if so, it will require added knowledge, and indeed in its progress it will necessarily store up knowledge. In Christ, we know then that we shall never cease to learn, to investigate, to add to our stock of knowledge, and therefore to our stock of power.

Masters of a divine hope, we escape from the shadow of this melancholy. We watch the sands running away and listen to the passing bell, if not with joy, at least with a new growth of resolution in the soul. And in cheerful effort, and in fortitude of heart, we pass out

of transient sorrow into the activity which exalts the present life and looks forward to a boundless development in the future.

The second source of melancholy in such an hour of arrested labour is retrospective thought. We look back from the position which our manhood has reached on our youth and childhood. We see ourselves like the tiny genius seated on the millstone, just beginning the career of learning which we have run; our wings of thought and imagination just starting from our shoulders—with the eagerness of important ignorance, with no shadow of the coming burden of weariness—winning with tablet and pencil the first elements of knowledge. Since then we have ceaselessly followed our course. Day by day we have increased in knowledge; and what has come of it all—of the hopes with which we began, of the unclouded weather of our brain, of the light 'which never was on sea or land,' of the life whose fountains were so full, of the boundless possibilities we pictured, of the easy dalliance with our powers? Disappointment, and weary thought, and twilight in the soul, and death, the slow death of power, and the exhaustion of the force of faculties by too rapid an use; and instead of a boundless range of view, a small defined horizon, and a voice which says in irony to a soul doomed never to be contented, 'Be content with your limitations.' Fame has come to such a man—the laurel is round his brow; wealth—the purse is at his feet; some practical power, the keys of which are at his girdle; but for these things he has ceased to care; for 'the heavy and the weary weight of the unintelligible

world,' more weary the finer our feeling has been made by knowledge, more heavy the more subtile and inquisitive our thought has been made by accurate learning, has come upon him. Increase of knowledge has awakened emotions for which he finds no channel, has created wants of the soul for which he finds no food. He desires the higher knowledge, because he has secured the lower, and there is no voice, nor any that answereth.

Then, in such an hour of passing melancholy as we speak of, he envies the light-hearted childhood which no question troubled; he remembers sorrows of youth which were more excellent pleasure than the joys of after-life; the good old time, when he was so miserable. It were worth all his knowledge to get back again, even for a day, 'the wild freshness of morning;' the early enthusiasm which sang like the lark, 'at heaven's gate.'

It is still sadder in such an hour, if we look back, not at our own youth, but at the children whom our career has inspired, who are beginning as we began—unwarned by our failure, disbelieving in our grief—with the same delight and the same hopes; delight which will grow as chill as ours, hopes which will droop as ours have done, and unbelief in sorrow which will grow into faith in pain, the only faith which in our hour of depression we possess.

So whether we see in Dürer's symbol of the child-genius, who sits near the great angel of the knowledge and toil of earth, the image of her own youth, or the image of another who is beginning the same exhausting effort, the thought is still full of melancholy.

Now what is the remedy of this retrospective sadness? As long as this melancholy which we have described is transient, as Dürer intended it to be, filling up a parenthesis between labour and labour, it is not an ignoble but a noble melancholy. For it is in reality the cry of our human nature, in contact with death and failure, for fuller life. It is the voice of our mightiest and purest spiritual appetite, making itself heard through the atmosphere of dull decay.

Only it is mistaken in that to which it looks. It looks back to youth, and pictures that time as the time when life was richest and deepest. The spiritual fact is that in youth we had less life, if we have developed ourselves truly, than we have now. We are now more complex, our spiritual and intellectual functions have a larger number of organs to perform them; and complexity of being and specialisation of functions attend and characterise higher life. We may have less careless freshness, less unsullied purity, less clearness of vision, but we have more practical power, more ease in sympathy, and if our vision is less clear it is because we have so much more to observe and consider. We have stored up a reservoir of force; we have taken into ourselves powers and new elements from all sides. We are like the great river, which may for a moment regret its noisy freshness and its crystal clearness when it was born among the hills, but which with a wiser mind prefers its full-volumed stream. For it has added to its waters a thousand rivulets, and with them, tidings from a hundred hills; and though its broad tide is stained with loosened clay, and charged with decaying

elements, yet it fertilises a whole country side, deposits far away new deltas for the life and toil of men, and bears upon its bosom the commerce of the nations. It is so with our manhood's labour, and the thought should place a heart of joy in the midst of our melancholy.

Moreover, our strong crying and tears in effort which has never reached its earthly end, our long and unrewarded toil of love and knowledge, are not lost in us. They are in reality latent powers in the soul, which in an undefective world will become strength of thought and ease of attainment. As the forces of the sunlight stored up in the vegetation of the coal break forth again millions of years afterwards to cheer a happy fireside at Christmas time with light and heat, so the stored-up force of our endurance will manifest itself as passionate joy under new conditions of being. Nay, we may even measure the hidden force of life within us by the depth of our sorrow.

This is the answer we may give ourselves when the increase of spiritual or mental knowledge has deepened in us, in a transient passage of melancholy, the pain of the contrast between the hopes of youth and the toil of manhood.

But, if such a melancholy were to continue—if, as some do, we cherish retrospect and find our only pleasure in remembering what we were, in continually wailing over dead ideals—then the answer is sharper and sterner. It is given in the results which this unmanly melancholy brings. We become useless, dreamy, slothful men; we become indifferent to the

great interests of the Present, because we are absorbed in the Past. We cease to grow, because we are isolated in self; and he who ceases to grow goes back slowly into the realm of nothingness and death. We are a dead weight on the progress of the world. Our idleness is an injury to the race; and the race rejects and despises us. Then our melancholy, face to face with this contempt, changes its nature; its dainty sweetness departs, and is succeeded by the coarse sourness of an old age of scorn.

That is the stern reply of law to the man who indulges in the continued melancholy of retrospect, to whom added knowledge has only brought despair of the future.

It is unmanliness to linger thus among the tombs. Christ calls us to a higher thought of life. Let dead ideals bury themselves, He says; come away from them and follow Me; there are other ideals in front, better and larger than the past. S. Paul accepts and realises the whole position. 'When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.' There is no unmanly retrospect in that, neither is there any depreciation of childhood. It had its own ways, they were good then—it was a joyful time, that too was good—but to wish it back again, except for a moment, were unworthy. Manhood brings nobler work, higher duties; and the child-life and youth are to be put away for ever. Nor was this said by one who did not feel the weight of the trouble which besets manhood. For he goes on: 'Now we see through a glass darkly'—'now we know in part.' But, observe, the pain does

not send him back for comfort, but forward. He steps out of a barren melancholy, being the possessor of an earnest faith and a saving hope. The time is coming when we shall see face to face, when we shall know as we are known: indistinct knowledge which bringeth sorrow, partial knowledge which itself is grief, shall vanish in clear light of perfect truth, in completed knowledge, and clearness and completion are faultless joy. It is the one inspiring element of Christianity that it throws us in boundless hope upon the future and forbids us to dwell in the poisonous shadows of the past. A new and better growth is before us, a fresher, a diviner, a more enthusiastic life awaits us. We are to wake up satisfied in the likeness of Christ, the ever-young Humanity. Therefore, forgetting those things which are behind, let us press forward unto the mark of the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus.

Lastly. There is a third source of melancholy in such an hour of arrested labour which is symbolised by the German artist and which illustrates my text.

The ladder, the geometrical figure, the tools of the architect and the carpenter, lie scattered at the feet of the genius. They have been used by knowledge for the labour of men. They are the instruments of that increased knowledge whose child is civilisation. What have they done for the world? We see the result in the engraving. There is the sea—a reminiscence of the Venetian lagoons, and carrying with it in the artist's mind the whole idea of the glory and wealth, of the commerce and civilisation of Venice—and on its borders are cities, ports, churches, fortifications, watch-towers.

Has civilisation, the result of toil and knowledge, brought happiness to men? No; but the strifes of theology, the curse and vice of wealth, wars, and the anger of nations, men preying on one another, woe and pain to the weak, evil souls to the strong. So Albert of Nuremberg, oppressed in his hour of thought with the misery of the suffering world, suffering from its knowledge, and the more it knows, places over the citied seaboard the fiery comet in the sky, which

> Disastrous twilight sheds, and with fear of change
> Perplexes nations,

and sends the bat forth to fly across the angry heaven with the apocalyptic scroll on which is written 'Melencolia,' to cry aloud the sadness of the world.

It is a sorrow which we all know in many a parenthesis of meditation, a sorrow which of all else is the most profound and the most consuming.

What is its remedy? Some will tell you to look only on the bright side of things, and to enjoy life, ignoring the evil. Others are content to rest in optimism, and to believe that all is well. But the real fact is, that there is more of the dark side than the light, and that things are not well to us at all, but very ill. Nor is the joyful faith in God which refuses to see evil that temper in which the noblest work has been done, nor does it, in the end, do anything for the world as long as it refuses to see the wrong in the world. It leaves its possessor both spiritually and intellectually weak; it lulls him into a lotus-eating repose which can do nothing to redeem mankind, and when the sorrow and evil of the world are forced home, as they probably will

be, on such a soul, he breaks down under the revelation, overwhelmed.

The true remedy is to penetrate steadily into the very depths of the dreadful mystery; to comprehend what destiny, and evil, and death mean; to go down into hell and know it, and conquer it. This is what Christ did, in resolute action upon earth, and out of this meeting of evil and sorrow face to face, not by passing them by and ignoring them, sprang his conquest—evil was overthrown, sorrow was changed into joy, death was swallowed up in victory—because He went down into hell.

This is what S. Paul did in resolute thought which refused to smooth away a single difficulty in the mystery of God's dealing with the world. In chapters ix., x., and xi. of his Epistle to the Romans, he deliberately meets the dreadful questions of the apparent unrighteousness and unfairness of God's dealings with mankind. Their terror, their ambiguity, their unrelenting march—he goes down into the abyss of them all. All his powers are concentrated into an unflinching gaze into the darkness. And what was the result? It was the same in the region of thought as Christ had arrived at in the region of action. It was conquest. Listen to what came of brave resolution to know the worst, to evade no difficulty: 'For God hath concluded them all in unbelief that He might have mercy upon all. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! for of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things. To Him be glory for ever

and ever. Amen.' The whole world contained and living in God. That was the answer.

Brethren, if we wish to win this conquest, we must do in action and thought what Christ and his Apostle did—realise the evil of our own hearts and of the world, fully and entirely, and set ourselves to meet it, resolving to be true and fearless, to keep our integrity and purity, so far as possible, clean and bright; but not in avoidance and ignoring of evil and its mystery, but in battle with it; not looking too much to the other world, but living seriously in this world; not seeking too much for peace of heart, nor expecting it, but in much tribulation following Christ; not querulously complaining of intellectual difficulties, but waiting and working, in sad but resolute faith, towards light.

I believe victory comes forth from that—practical success in conquering wrong and setting things right; and intellectual power able to answer the dreadful mysteries which overwhelm humanity.

In this way, the melancholy which Dürer symbolises does not induce despair, but urges to activity. He seems to have felt this. There is the light of coming action in the eyes of the Angel of the Toil and Intelligence of Earth. She has seen the depths of sorrow and sin, and they can terrify her mind and chill her energy no more. She will soon open the book, and move the compasses, and take up again the instruments of the uncontented toil of knowledge. Pain may be increased by knowledge, but it is the pain of the travail of a new birth. The insight she has gained into evil will make her work

in the future more unyielding, more enduring. In the very centre of the dark sorrow she has caught a glimpse of the light of far-off victory; and so above the bat-like scroll of melancholy, and the disastrous twilight, and the menace of the comet, the spiritual artist of Germany threw the triumphal arch of the rainbow, the symbol of a divine but distant hope.

The increase of knowledge includes the increase of sorrow; but the knowledge of the depth of sorrow is the gate of a divine joy.

ART EXPENDITURE.

'Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?'—John xii. 5.

THERE were, once upon a time, two men who were friends, but whose characters and pursuits in life were different. The one was a lover of Beauty, the other a lover, as he said, of Use. The latter had given up his life to 'practical purposes;' he had built houses for the poor, he had arranged the sanitary measures of a city, he had visited the prisons and the hospitals, and had toiled to save disease and crime. And his character and strength were suited to this work, so that he did it well.

The other had spent his life in examining the Beautiful; he had studied its laws in nature and art, and he devoted himself in retirement to expressing what he had discovered in the most beautiful manner possible: his enthusiasm pushed him to think that men would be interested in his work, and his aim was to awaken in the world the love of Beauty by giving a high and noble pleasure. He did not care to teach morality as the first thing, but to make beautiful things familiar; and by bringing these beautiful things before men, to refine imaginations not as yet refined, till they could

see the more ideal beauty. This being his work, and his character and physical temper being suited to it, he did it well, and he did nothing else. He did not visit the poor, nor was he seen in hospitals. His money was spent on beautiful things such as he wanted for his work, not on sanitary improvements and model cottages.

With this life and with this expenditure his friend became angry. 'What!' he said, 'will you make poems while famine is making death? The poor are perishing; God's children are being done to death; disease and crime are devouring the nation, and you sit still in your poetic and artistic leisure, producing only words. Throw away all this useless work, attack evil, expose oppression, cleanse the foul dwelling, see and realise what poverty and pain mean. To what purpose is this waste? These things which you call beautiful might be sold for much money, and given to the poor.' So he spoke in his dark anger; and the spirit of his friend was moved, and he went forth into the rude work of the world. It sickened and dismayed him; his poetical power went from him; his faculty for revealing the Beautiful passed away; his delicacy and sympathy caused him to break down in contact with crime and disease. He tried hard, but it was failure; his life was ruined, and no good was done. He could not do his friend's work, and trying to do it, he ceased to be able to do his own.

Now, I say that this sort of thing, so common now, is not only a pity, but that a great wrong is done to man-

kind by this Judas cry. Each man has his own work, and it is a shameful thing, if any of us, imagining that our peculiar work is the only important one, take advantage of our greater violence of character and drag away our friend from his work to enlist him as our follower. It is then that we should hear the words of Christ: 'Let her alone: why trouble ye the woman? she hath wrought a good work for Me.' For they are the consecration of those labours which do not directly act upon the welfare of men, but indirectly on it through the awakening of feeling; they are the consecration of the expenditure of time and money upon things which kindle in the heart the sense of beauty, and bring with them the thoughts which exalt and adorn existence. This, with the thoughts bound up with it, is our subject this morning.

First. It is no wonder that there are many who have indignation at the apparent waste of time upon the arts, who demand that all our expenditure should be visibly reproductive. For the worst sin of our society is its waste of wealth. Night and day, while the commonest necessities of decent living are not placed in the power of those in want of them, Dives and his crew cast hundreds of pounds into the Thames, and excuse themselves on the plea, so often proved a false one, that expenditure on dress and luxuries encourages trade and adds to the wealth of the country. They cannot, and they will not understand that buying seeds and then burning them is a different thing from sowing seed in the earth which will spring up in thirtyfold ears of corn. It is no wonder, I repeat, that there are many who, indignant

at this waste, should call upon all to make the directly useful the aim of expenditure.

And utility ought always to be the end of expenditure.

But, is there only one utility in relation to the welfare of men? Must all expenditure increase the material happiness of man? are we never doing man good, except when we are providing for his outward wants or giving him an education which will enable him to get on in the world? Even in matters like food and dress are we forced to restrain our expenditure to that which is absolutely necessary? Expenditure beyond the necessary on these things is certainly unproductive, but is it always useless? I answer, that we are bound not only to assist the poor, but also to charm our society, to show that we have thought of others by our desire to delight them. Within certain limits, expenditure on dress is useful in producing a social ease and charm. Where it is entirely neglected—in a household, for example—it produces domestic quarrels, and it really means not only carelessness of person, but carelessness of pleasing.

Expenditure on it is not productive of material good to others—it is productive of another kind of good altogether.

Then there is also the question of food. Within certain limits some extra expenditure on providing a pleasant banquet for one's friends is not truly unproductive. It is a symbol of our willingness to please, of our desire to give of our best to those we love and honour, and as such it rises out of the common and material into the spiritual. In both cases persons may

come to you and say, 'Why was not this dress, these wines, sold for money and given to the poor?' In both cases we may reply on the same principle on which Christ replied.

But observe—the real aim in both these cases in which I have said that expenditure apparently unproductive is good, has been the desire to please, the desire to express affection, the desire to give—the same desires which filled the woman's heart in the Gospel.

Are those the desires which guide the unbridled expenditure of society on food and dress? Is that the aim with which vast sums—vast when one thinks of the misery they might help to remedy—are uselessly cast away upon luxurious dinners and costly clothing?

Not at all. Everyone is aware that the usual aim is to make a show; to have society talking of our splendour; to rival our neighbour, not in elegance but in expenditure; to hear the world talking of the great sums spent at our supper, or of the endless variety of our dress. And on the whole, is there a meaner or more contemptible ambition in the world than this? It is not the ambition to make the world more beautiful, it is self-display; it is not the ambition to please others, it is the desire to win an envious applause at the expense of others, for half the pleasure derived is in the thought that others are left behind in this race of fashionable fame.

Expenditure on food and dress for the sake of display is vile expenditure. In itself it is coarse, for its aim is not beauty, and it is unintelligent, for it is blindly led by the fashion. It is, moreover, wicked, for it

is destroying wealth, and the destruction of wealth is theft.

But it is allowable within certain limits, when its aim is the giving of a refined pleasure to others; when it is a symbol of love, sympathy, or friendship.

This leads me directly to the story in the text. Christ, in a certain set of circumstances, consecrated unproductive expenditure. A costly oil was poured upon his head. It expressed the love of one who could find no expression of her love in words. It was the symbol of a profound tenderness. One who stood by and who afterwards betrayed, put on indignation, and, remembering the past teaching of his Master, thought he would appeal directly to that teaching: 'Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? To what purpose is this waste?' But Christ saw that the woman's heart needed expression, felt that the love not only made right, but glorified the expenditure; saw that the scented ointment was not ointment now, but had been changed into all the costlier tenderness and long regret of a woman's heart; and exalting the act into the realm of the Divine, He put aside the mean utility which claimed the money for the poor.

Observe in this his largeness of soul. Apparently He had contradicted Himself. He had said to the young ruler, 'Sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor.' Would He not say that this woman had done wrong, especially when the money was spent on Himself? But Christ lived far above the sphere in which this objection could touch his soul. He did not care for

apparent contradictions, for his sayings were founded on principles which expressed themselves differently according to the events and characters they met, and He knew that when men found the principles they would understand that sayings which seemed contradictory were in reality at one. And the principle on which his speech to the young ruler, and his address to this woman were made was this—that all expenditure should be for the welfare of mankind. The ruler was to give to the poor and produce material happiness for those who needed it. The woman had given to the world one of those acts which by the expression of profound and noble feeling produces profound and noble feeling, and this was even a higher use of expenditure than the other, and productive of a purer welfare to the race. 'Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in all the world, this also which this woman hath done shall be told as a memorial of her.' You cannot imagine that Christ looked only to the fame of the woman when He said these words; He looked to the true and tender feelings which her act would kindle in the hearts of men. He saw faithful and self-sacrificing love—the desire to give all away for the sake of another—glorified in her act from generation to generation, and He made by his approving voice the act eternal. Hence, extending the principle, all expenditure productive of true feeling is noble expenditure, is useful, often, in a better way to man than if it had been given in mere charity, or lavished on promoting the material comfort of mankind.

To give a man a roof over his head is important, but

to awake his heart, to feed in him the germs of sympathy, tenderness, and purity, to stir within him the sleeping enthusiasm for truth, is still more important.

To get a man on in the world, to let him have welfare and peace of body, is good, but to refine his imagination, to lead him to love the beauty of God's world and to be enthusiastic in his admiration, though he never be able to express that enthusiasm, is still more important.

These are the works of the poets and artists; for I do not speak now of the higher work done by prophets on the religious spirit; and all expenditure of any capital with these aims in view, is noble, though apparently unproductive expenditure. Only the same thing applies to their work which applied to the woman's act. It must have the expression of fine human feeling at its root; it must desire to give pleasure to men; it must not be for ostentation or any selfish end. If it be true to these aims, we may say of it, that wherever humanity extends, its influence will be productive of good to men.

There are those to whom God has given this work to do. They must necessarily withdraw from what is called the practical work of the world and give themselves wholly to their particular business. And I want to say, as my parable has hinted at the beginning, that all attempts made by persons who see only one form of being useful to men, to drag the artists, poets, and the rest of their tribe into the so-called practical toil of the world, and to torment them in their work by reproaches and cries of uselessness, are attempts worthy of strong blame, and in themselves a wicked interference with God's division of labour. Important and unimportant!

it is curious how utterly the world misapplies these words. The work of a great poet or a great artist is much more important in its results upon the whole race than many of those things to which history gives undue pre-eminence. The life and wars of Napoleon fill several volumes, but their importance is as nothing before the life and poetry of Wordsworth. Our historians teach our children all about the battles of Creçi and Poitiers, as if the war then waged was not absolutely detrimental to England; scarcely a word is said about Chaucer, and Wicliffe, and the great popular movements of that time. The quarrels of kings and nobles in our early English time fill page after page. Few dwell for an instant on the life of Bæda or the birth of English poetry with Cædmon, and yet the work of these two men outweighs in real importance a century of political squabbles. It is practical work to pass education bills, and to carry out sanitary measures, but it is not really unpractical, but even more practical, to influence men nobly through a great picture, or to kindle their hearts by a great poem.

For the work which appeals to the soul does not end with the soul it influences; it spreads from the inward to the outward, and the feelings which are stirred cannot rest till they take life in action. The poet opens a new world to men. He makes an image of Mankind. He reveals the way in which the human heart acts in many circumstances and relations of life. He makes all his readers sympathise with these varied events and men. In this way the world of the reader is expanded. New interests are given to him; he sees in others his own human nature; he sympathises with persons all over the

world. If he is poor he is made to feel with the rich, if he is rich he is made to feel with the poor. The idea of a deep underlying brotherhood takes possession of him—and all this is done for thousands and thousands, from generation to generation. Most human work falls into nothingness before this. Further, it promotes the outward practical labour of which so much is said. For with the expansion of the soul comes the expansion of the whole nature of the man, and his awakened and extended feelings carry him into active exertion for his fellows—if that be his natural labour.

It is the same with him who teaches men to see what is beautiful. Some dare to look down upon this man's life as unproductive. But the Press can tell us of the wants of the poor, and say that the foulness of England is a disgrace. It is only a few artists who can teach us how to see the loveliness of a mountain line or the chord of colour in an evening cloud, to listen with a hearing ear to the music of the stream, or to rejoice in its purity. The work of both is good, but the work of the first rivets the attention of men on the dreadful and deathful elements of human life, and makes the poor who listen to it miserable and indignant: the work of the other adds to the life of rich and poor sweeter thoughts and better elements. It calls their attention to that which is pure and lovely, and awakens in them aspiration. He who is taught to see and delight in the colour of a primrose has something henceforth in him which will go far to keep him from cruelty to his wife; he who has been taught to be happy in the purity of a meadow stream has something

ever afterwards in him which will make him loathe the dirt in his back-yard.

Moreover this sort of work fills the hours of a man's recreation with humanising and blessed influences. A man learns great lessons in his daily labour, but the lessons which he might learn in his hours of holiday when his heart lies open to receive that teaching of God which comes without asking, are often higher because more spiritual. But a certain amount of teaching is necessary to cause men to open their eyes and to unclose their heart. Without it, unless in cases where there is great natural receptiveness, and even in these cases teaching is needed for right direction of observation, the moments of a man's rest are nearly useless to him. It is the blessed work of the lover of beauty, who has spent money and time and given the devotion of a lifetime to gain a knowledge of loveliness, to teach men to see, to open to them the sealed book of the Heavens and the Earth, to unfold to them the meaning of the work of great men in the arts, to pass on beyond this and to make the heart thrill with the lessons which flow from the glory of God in the beauty of the world and the glory of man in the creations of art. For so the evening walk after toil, the yearly times set apart from the stormy stress of life, will be filled with natural piety and noble thought, with tranquillising research and joy, and the whole nature set a-growing naturally towards things which are of good report and of pure beauty.

And it is the infinite importance of all this which makes one indignant when at a cry of economy men

would withdraw the flowers from the park, or reduce the sum doled out with reluctant distress by the State for the purchase of beautiful things or their preservation. It is not even the Judas cry which we hear, it is not that this money is wanted for the poor: the poor speak plainly enough that they would rather have their flowers than their worth in money. But we spend thousands in diplomacy, the chief end of which appears to be not to settle international questions, but to arrange the quarrels of a few kings and queens and to sow the seed of future wars. No one complains of this expenditure, but every year a number of blind persons start up to object to a grant to science or art. We put off year by year the building of a National Gallery to preserve and exhibit usefully priceless treasures, things which may speak to men's hearts when everything we are fighting about with such eagerness will have no power to interest anyone; and we lavish millions on preparations for destroying our fellow-creatures, as if it were not true that if diplomacy were placed on a right basis and made, as it ought to be, a noble instead of a mean profession—international interests being the first instead of national; the interest of the whole body of nations being felt to be the interest of each; the personal interests of great personages being always placed below the interests of mankind; the desire for a free interchange of all good things among nations being the main object, so that peace would grow out of the natural movement and play of every nation in and with its fellow, till Europe, Asia, and America formed one closely woven web—as if, if these things were done, we

ought to have any war at all. If even the fourth part of our thirty millions were let loose for righteous and remedial work, what might we not do for our country? We might then do our duty to the poor and the criminal without hearing the cry of Judas in our ears if we expended money on things which smooth and ennoble life. And the men who do the work of producing and teaching the beautiful, who toil apart that they may make new worlds for us and kindle creative emotion in our hearts, might live their lives without being tortured by the cries of starving men and ruined women; without being troubled by the well-meaning but foolish persons who say to them: 'Why is not your work sold for so much, and given to the poor?'

Yes, we come back in the end to the other side of the question. I have pleaded the cause of the poets and the artists who teach men to see and feel the beautiful in nature and in the heart of man. I have asked that men who can do the work which produces a priceless harvest in the imagination and the soul, should be let alone and not worried out of it by those who think the visibly useful the only useful. But if they are to be let alone and to retain the peace of heart necessary for any great work, we, who cannot do their work, ought to do that which they cannot do, and which they would spoil if they tried. We ought to prepare the way for their influence. Men cannot find pleasure in beautiful things, nor feel their power, as long as they are living like the brutes. We ought to clean London and the country; to make dwellings in which men can live without the constant risk of

disease; to secure that good food is sold; to have everywhere pure water in plenty.

You may not be able to apply yourselves directly to these things, and probably you would do them badly. But there are many young men among you who in one way at least may help towards work of this kind. By writing, by influence in and out of Parliament and in your business relations, you may work in many ways towards placing international relations on such a basis as will set, as I said, a large quantity of our military and naval money free for practical improvement of the country's welfare. The number who are doing that now might be counted in two minutes. I am sure no more Christian work than that can exist, and if it is done heartily and with a genuine desire to help the race, it is well-pleasing to God. You will not see results now; but what is man worth unless he has faith in the future, belief in principles, and sufficient courage to labour without always wanting like a child to grasp his result at once?

Another thing we may do. We may avoid all expenditure for the sake of show, or for the sake of pushing our way into higher circles. We may deny ourselves the wretched pleasure of being pointed at as men and women who spend more than others in food, and dress, and luxuries. We may resolve to waste no more money on things which have no intrinsic value, whose value passes away in smoke. We may hate all gambling, betting, and all other ways of that kind in which wealth is consumed, avoiding all places where this unhallowed robbery of the country is carried

on. A few men and women in society who should mark their contempt and hatred of this waste, with the firmness of good taste, would begin the formation of a strong public opinion against these things, and render them in the end as shameful as they are. That is one way at least of serving God and following Christ, which is in the power of many among you.

If these things were done, a quantity of capital would be set free which might be employed in practical and reproductive work. And the outward and visible wants being supplied, there will be room for well-educated expenditure on beautiful things which have a lasting value, and we may call upon the rich to spend large sums in promoting the higher educational wants of the country. I do not know what a man is a millionaire for, unless it is that he should undertake great public works for the nation. Once that was the case in England, it is continually the case in America. Here and there among our merchants there are men who found large libraries and public institutions. But one does not hear of men possessing almost fabulous property and who have a fashion of calling themselves poor, because they needlessly support a number of establishments, expending, as they ought to do, a year's income in the space of three or four years, and that not once but often in their lives, on some great public work. It is our colossal and hereditary fortunes who ought to build the National Gallery, who ought to endow science, who ought to establish libraries and art schools in every part of England; who ought to found new colleges at Oxford and Cambridge for the poorer students; who

ought to feel that overweening wealth can only be endured in the hands of private persons when a large public use is made of it. This would be the way to make a noble reputation, to hand down one's name, not as a by-word for extravagance or for parsimony, but blazoned with the gold of honour and bright with the tears of gratitude.

And there are numberless things which men of lesser wealth, but with more than they have the right to spend upon themselves and their estates, may do which will help on the world far better than giving of alms. They ought to find out men who only want some help to make them useful to the world, and to put them forward in life. A few hundreds a year would have saved Keats for us as Calvert saved Wordsworth. It ought to be understood that money would be forthcoming whenever in the National Schools a boy rises so plainly above his fellows as to make it plain that the world would be the better for his liberal education. It should be part of the duties of the rich to search for such men. It should be part of their duty to buy valuable things for the national collections, and they ought to be educated, as they are not, to know a first-rate thing when they see it. Why should public money be spent on a great picture, when there are five hundred men in England who could buy it and not know that they had bought it? There are fifty other ways in which private purses can do public duties, but I cannot dwell upon them now. Let these things suffice.

And to conclude all, it is not unfitting for a Christian minister to say that the work of artist and poet of

which we have been speaking, and the work of those who, not being themselves prophets of the beautiful, yet labour to help those who are, is, as well as that of charitable giving, Christian work; not unpleasing to the Father of all Light and the King in His Beauty, when its aim is not private ostentation but the desire to give men a noble pleasure and the welfare which comes through that. Be sure that expenditure for this purpose, though it may seem unproductive, is not unproductive; nor will the Great Judge at the end support the accuser who may say, like Judas, Why were not these things sold for much, and given to the poor?

CHILD LIFE.

'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God.'—Luke xviii. 16.

It is a happy thought that the children who climb upon our knees are fresh from the hand of God, living blessings which have drifted down to us from the imperial palace of the love of God, that they still hear some of the faint notes of the music of God's life, still bear upon their faces traces of the uncreated light. Heathen sage and Christian poet have enshrined the thought, each according to his knowledge, and though there is no proof of its truth, yet we cannot neglect as quite fruitless in wisdom so wide-spread an intuition. It is vain to sneer at it as poetry, in vain at least for some of us. He cannot scorn this thought who feels, as his children's faces light up at his coming, not pleasure only, but an inner sense of gratitude that things so pure, so close to God, should give to him, with the sense of his unworthiness deep within, so much and so unsuspectingly. Their trust seems to carry with it something of the forgiveness of Heaven. The man sees the tolerant tenderness of God his Father in the child whom He has sent him—that his little one believes in him, bestows on him the blessing of an ever-renewed hope.

Nor can he scorn this thought who on philosophic grounds believes that all living beings are held in God, are manifestations of part of the Divine thought. He knows that a phase of that idea which God has of the whole race is incarnate in his child, that his child is destined to reveal it, that this is the purpose for which God sent it into the world. Therefore hidden within this speck of mankind he recognises a germ of the Divine essence which is to grow into the harvest of an active life, with a distinct difference from other lives.

And if, born of these two thoughts, a sadness succeeds the first touch of joy and gratitude, when the parents think how soon the inevitable cloud of life will make dim the heavenly light; how long, how evil, may be the days of their child's pilgrimage; how far he may retreat from God—yet, we who believe, not in a capricious idol of power, but in a just Father who loves—we who hold that there is nothing which is not in God, cannot distrust the end. Our children are in His hands; they will some time or other fulfil the work of revealing God; they *must*, for God does not let one of His thoughts fail. If all life be in God, no life ever gets loose from God; it is an absolute imperative of the philosophy which denies that anything can be which is not of God, that nothing can ever finally divide itself from Him. Our children, like ourselves, are already saved by right. Years of what we call time will be needed to educate them into union with God in fact, but that end is as certain, if God exist, as God's existence.

This thought of what I may call the divinity of child-

hood is still further supported by the exquisite relation in which Christ put Himself to children. The heart of woman will never forget that beautiful wayside story where He consecrated the passion of motherhood. The religious spirit will never cease, when disturbed by the disputes of the worldlier life, to remember his words when, bringing the disciples back to the sweetness of early charity, He took a child and placed it in their midst. The soul distressed with questions of belief remembers with a touch of peaceful pleasure how Christ recalled his people to the natural simplicity of faith, to that higher and deeper religion which lives beyond the wars of the understanding, when He said, 'Whoso shall receive one such little child in My name receiveth Me.'

And when mistaken religious persons press hard upon the truth and tenderness of the relation of parents to children, and bid the one look upon the other as children of the devil—corrupting with their poison the sweetest source of feeling in the world and the love which of all human love links us closest to the heart of God, we fall back in indignant delight upon the words of the Saviour: 'Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven.'

And once more, when we think that God revealed Himself in the childhood of the Saviour, the thought of the divinity of childhood becomes still more real. To us it is much, in our stormy and sorrowful life, to think of Christ in his manhood conquering and being made perfect through suffering; but when we wish to escape

into a calmer, purer air, we turn from the image of our Master as 'the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,' dear as that is to us, and look with infinite pleasure on the earlier days at Nazareth, imagine Him playing in the meadow and rejoicing in the sunlight and the flowers, taking his mother's kiss, and growing in the peace of love—and so learn to dream of God, revealed not only as the Eternal Father, but, in some not unworthy sense, as also the Eternal Child.

It is a thought which bathes all our children in a divine light. They live for us in the childhood of Christ; they move for us and have their being in the childhood of God.

In the directest opposition to all this—to the poetic instinct of Greek and Christian poetry and philosophy, to the natural instincts of the human heart, to the teaching and acts of Christ, to the revelation of God in childhood—is the dreadful explanation which some have given of original sin. Children are born, we are told, with the consummate audacity of theological logic, under the moral wrath of God, are born children of the devil. I have already denied this from this place, and stated instead of it the fact—that we are born with a defective nature which may and does lead to moral fault, but in itself it is no more immoral than colour-blindness. I have said that this imperfectness is the essential difference of human nature, that which makes man differ from God, from angels, from brutes; that which makes him, so far as we know, the only being in the universe capable of progress. It is a defectiveness distinctly contemplated, distinctly initiated by God, who wished

for a being in His universe the history of which should be the attainment of perfectness through struggle against defectiveness. As such, the defectiveness of our children, as well as our own, has in it a thought which glorifies it. We see in its first developments, and in the way in which the spiritual element meets it, the beginning of that noble struggle in which the soul will have the glory and pleasure of advance, the delight of conquest as well as the misery of failure; the interest of a great drama, and the final resurrection into freedom from weakness, error, and restraint.

Whatever way we look then, upon our children, our first feeling should be reverence for the divine within them, infinite desire to help them to recognise that divine idea, and to express it through life, in a noble form. This should be the basis of education. If it were, we should have less bad men and bad women.

For we should remember that children on whom we can make almost any impression we please, so ductile is their wax, will become what they are believed to be, will reverence their own nature when they feel that it is reverenced, will believe that they are of God, and know and love Him naturally when they are told that God is in them.

But the other basis of education has an irresistible tendency to degrade them, and it only shows how near they are to God that it does not degrade them more. What conceivable theory is more likely to make them false, untrustful, cunning, ugly-natured, than that which calls them children of the devil, and acts as if the one object of education was, not to develope the God within

them, but to lash the devil out of them? Let them think that you believe them to be radically evil, and the consequences be on your own head. You will make them all you think them to be. Every punishment will make them more untrue, more fearful, more cunning; and instead of day by day having to remit punishment, you will have to double it and treble it, and at last, end by giving it up altogether in despair, or by making your child a sullen machine of obedience.

Instead of trusting your child, you will live in an atmosphere of constant suspicion of him, always thinking that he is concealing something from you, till you teach him concealment and put lies in his mouth and accustom him to the look and thought of sin; and then—having done this devilish work and turned the brightness and sweetness of childhood into gloom and bitterness, and having trodden into hardened earth the divine germs in his heart—what happens? You send him into the world already a ruined character, taught through you to live without God in his soul, without God in the world, to believe in evil and not in good.

Do not complain afterwards if he disappoint you, if he turn out a cruel or a dishonourable, or a miserable man. It is you who have made him so, and God will have a dreadful reckoning with you. 'I mistook,' you will say, as you tremble before His judgment-seat; 'I did it for the best.' Alas! there will be no possible excuse for you, but this, which links you with the slayers of Christ, Father, forgive me, for I knew not what I did.'

Teach your child to believe in the goodness of his

nature, in his nearness to God. And this leads me to the first characteristic of childhood, faith; faith, the quality whose outward form is trust.

It speaks well for the beauty of the human quality of faith that it is so lovely a thing to us when we see it pure in childhood. No pleasure is so great as that which we receive when, in their hours of joy, still more when sorrow or disease attack them, we see the light of our children's faith in us shining in their eyes.

It speaks well for the spiritual power of this quality that it has on us such winning force. We grant to it as we recognise it, what we should grant to nothing else—we cannot hold back from its often mute request anything which is not wrong for us to give. It overcomes the world in us: it leads us to make a thousand sacrifices. It charms our weary life, it attracts and softens our sated heart. It makes us feel our own relation to God, and what it should be, for it is its earthly image. The parents who have not encouraged and loved this quality in children towards themselves, will have but little of it in their own relation to God. They will give no pleasure to the Divine Father, they will have no natural power with Him.

Having this faith, the child is, as long as it is unspoilt by us, fearless, and fearless under the difficulties of a vivid imagination, not the high imagination which composes images towards an artistic end, but the untutored quality which works without an impulse or an aim. On the child's receptive heart everything makes a strong impression, numberless images are received. And at night, when no new impressions are made by

outward objects, these images rise up a thronging crowd in the brain. And the work of the brain, just beginning to learn itself, and as yet under no ordinance of the will, composes, combines, contrasts these images into a thousand fantastic forms.

Spoil the child's faith in the world being good to it and pleasant; frighten it with falsehoods to keep it quiet, tell it a single lie, and let it lose a grain of its divine trust in you; show yourself violent, unreasonable, harsh, or cruel, and every one of these images may take a frightful form. What it has suffered from you, the distrust it has gained from you, will creep like a subtile element of fear into the creations of its fancy, and terror is born in its heart.

Again, this unquestioning faith makes the child think that everything is possible, and as many things are possible which the fear which reasons deters us from attempting, the child often does feats which astonish us. So nations in their childhood, and men inspired by intense faith, have believed in themselves and done things called miraculous.

It is unwise to attack too rudely even this self-confidence of childhood. Lessen the child's faith in his own powers, and you will check the growth of that happy audacity which in boyhood and youth wins afterwards so much—that easy daring and self-confidence which, when it is limited by good manners, is so charming in society.

Nature herself will teach him humility soon enough, and you had better let him find out his limits in this direction for himself. She has a way of teaching which

is irresistible; which, though it stops audacity with firmness, yet shows that she is pleased with the audacity; which points out a way of conquering herself. And in the child's relation to his home and society, you yourself can check the fearless self-confidence when it degenerates into impertinence or thoughtlessness, not by harsh rebuke, but by appealing to the natural impulse of affection. The limit placed by saying and enforcing this —'Do nothing, my child, say nothing, which will give pain to others'—is not a limit which will crush the natural boldness of the heart. It is a limit which appeals to love, and the desire to be loved is an element in the child's nature as strong as faith. It will be seen to be natural and reasonable, it will be accepted.

Again, as to this faith in its relation to God, how does it take a religious form? The child's religious faith is, first, faith in you—mother, father, guardian; to early childhood you are God. And when you come to give a name to the dim vision of the growing child, and call it God, it will grow into form before him, clothed with your attributes, having your character. If the child learn to worship an idol—a jealous, capricious, passionate God—it is not his fault half so much as yours. What were you to him when he was young? Were you violent, sulky, exacting, suspicious, ruling by force and not by love? Whatever you were, his God in boyhood will wear your shape and bear your character, and he will grow like the character he contemplates. As he grows older, he needs more direct teaching. He asks who is God, what is His character, what His will. For he

cannot but desire to know these things, through a vague curiosity, if through nothing more. For by and by, God touches him. Spiritual impulses, slight, but distinct, come to him in hours of temptation; voices make themselves heard in his heart; passion renders life exalted, and in the more wakeful state it genders, the germs of spiritual life push forth; nature speaks her dim message in some lonely moment on the hills or in the wood, and he is conscious of an undefined want. What has he to fall back on then? What ideas have you given him to which he may now fly for solution of the growing problem? what forms of thought which the new powers of spiritual faith and love may breathe upon and make a living God? The whole spiritual future of his youth then trembles in the balance. Fathers and mothers, you do not know often what you are doing; what misery, what bitterness, what hardness of heart, what a terrible struggle, or what a hopeless surrender of the whole question you have prepared for your child by the dismal theology and the dreadful God, and the dull heaven, which you have poured into the ear of childhood. Long, long are the years, before the man whose early years have been so darkened can get out of the deadly atmosphere into a clear air, and see the unclouded face of God.

So far for the faith of childhood; on its love I need not dwell, the same things apply to it as apply to faith; but on its joyfulness and the things connected therewith we speak as we draw to a conclusion.

The child's joy comes chiefly from his fresh receptiveness. His heart is open to all impressions as the

bosom of the earth is to the heavenly airs and lights. Nothing interferes to break the tide of impressions which roll in wave on wave—no brooding on the past, no weary anticipations of the future. He lives, like God, in an eternal present. The world is wonderful to him, not in the sense of awaking doubts or problems, but as giving every moment some miraculous and vivid pleasure, and it is pleasure in the simplest things. His father's morning kindness makes him thrill; his food is to him the apples of paradise. The sunlight sleeping on the grass, the first fall of snow in winter, the daisy stars he strings upon the meadow, the fish leaping in the stream, the warm air which caresses his cheek, the passing of the great waggon in the street, the swallows' nest above his bedroom window, the hour of rest at night, and his prayer at his mother's knee—all are loved lightly and felt keenly, and touch him with a poetic pleasure. And each impression, as it comes, is clothed in simple words—words which often, in their spontaneousness, their fearless unconsciousness, their popular quality, their fitness for music, have something of a lyric note, something of the nature of a perfect song. For the child lives in a world of unconscious art. He is fearless in his delight, and when he is happy he trusts his own instincts as revelations: and if we could get back in after-life something of this, we should all be artists in heart. One knows in the highest genius that, united with manhood's trained power of expression, there is an eternal element of childhood. Take, for example, the perfect song, such as the songs of Shakespeare were. They were spontaneous, sudden,

popular, simple, and able to be sung. But above all, they derive their magic and winning power from the poet's fearlessness, from his trust in, and his delight in his instinctive emotions. The songs of other poets are spoiled by their fear of their simplicity being called absurd by the public, by that doubt whether the thing is quite right, that thinking about thought, that shyness of one's own feeling which come from want of that unconscious trust in his rightness and delight in it which a child possesses. The kingdom of a perfect song, the kingdom of a perfect work of art, is like the kingdom of heaven, one must enter it like a little child.

'Fostered alike by beauty and by fear,' fear which has its thrill of joy, the child grows into union with the world, and into consciousness of his own heart, till 'the characters of danger and desire' are impressed upon all outward forms, and day by day more vividly that great enjoyment swells which makes

> The surface of the universal earth
> With triumph and delight, with hope and fear,
> Work like a sea.

And in quieter moments, calmer pleasures are his—pleasures of love given and received, pleasures of childish friendship, pleasures of first successes in learning and in new pursuits, pleasures of obscure feelings just touched, not understood, which make in after-life

> Those recollected hours that have the charm
> Of visionary things, those lovely forms
> And sweet sensations which throw back our life,
> And almost make remotest infancy
> A visible scene, on which the sun is shining.

We look back on them with reflection, but there was no reflection, or but little, then; the life was natural, unthoughtful, only now and then, amid the full movement of unconscious pleasure, flashes of deeper thought arose and passed away, a faint touch of something to come, a weight within the pleasure, a dim sense of sublimity or calm, a suspicion of what duty meant, just came and were forgotten, but did not die. They went to form the heart, to build up that which was to become the man, and they arose afterwards in maturer life to impregnate and to elevate the mind.

We spoil all this divine teaching of God and nature by forcing the child out of his unconsciousness into self-consciousness, by demanding of him reflection, by checking the joy of his receptiveness by too much teaching, too much forcing. Let him remain for a time ignorant of himself, and abide in his heavenly Father's hands; let him live naturally, and drink in his wisdom and his religion from the influences which God makes play around him. Above all, do not demand of him, as many do, convictions of sin, nor make him false and hysterical by calling out from his imitative nature deep spiritual experiences which he cannot truly feel. Let him begin with natural religion, leave him his early joy untainted, see that he knows God as love and beauty and sympathy. It is horrible to anticipate for him the days, soon enough to come, when sorrow and sin will make of life a battle, where victory can only be bought by pain.

But if we keep these early days pure and joyful, full of the blessedness of uninjured faith and unconscious

love, we give to the man that to which he can always look back with hope, and use for the kindling of effort and aspiration. For the dim remembrance of their pure and powerful pleasure, the divinity within them, have virtue to recall us in after-life, when high feeling is dulled with the cares of this world, to loftier and better thoughts; to nourish and repair imagination when its edge is blunted by distress and doubt; to exalt the soul with hope, that though innocence is lost, yet goodness remains to be won; to tell us, in the midst of the transient and the perishable, that our life is hidden in God, and our spirit at home in immortality.

It is true that inimitable innocence and fearlessness, that perfect trust, that belief that nothing is impossible, that fresh and honest freedom, that divine joy, cannot be the blessing of the man. He has been driven out of Eden, and the swords wave for ever over the gate and forbid return. But there is a nobler paradise before us, the paradise of the soldier spirit which has fought with Christ against the evil, and finished the work which the Father has given him to do. There the spirit of the child shall be mingled with the power of the man, and we shall once more, but now with ennobled passion and educated energies, sing the songs of the fearless land, children of God, and men in Christ.

It is true that, tossed with doubt, and confused with thoughts which go near to mastering the will, we are tempted to look back with wild regret to the days, when children, we dreamt so happily of God, and lived in a quaint and quiet heaven of our own fanciful creation, and took our dreams for realities, and were happy

in our belief. But after all, though the simple religion is lost, its being now more complex does not make it less divine; our faith is more tried, but it is stronger; our feelings are less easily moved, but they are deeper; our love of God is less innocent, but how much more profound; our life is not so bright in the present, but its future is glorious in our eyes. We are men who know that we shall be made partakers of the child's heart towards our Father, united with the awe and love and experience of the man. And then, through death, again we enter the imperial palace whence we came. We hear the songs and voices which of old we heard before we left our home, but we hear them now with fuller, more manly comprehension; we see again the things which eye hath not seen, but our vision pierces deeper. We worship God with the delight of old, before we went upon our Wander-Year, but the joy is more stately, for it is now the joy of sacrifice; and all things now are new to us, for we have grown into men, and we feel the power and joy of progress. But never, as we look to Him who led us all our life long until this day, shall we lose the feeling of the child. Through all eternity the blessing of the child's heart shall be ours. In the midst of our swiftest work, in the midst of our closest pursuit of new knowledge, in the midst of all the endless labour and sacrifice of the heavenly life, we shall always turn with the sense of infinite peace to God, and say, Our Father, suffer a little child to come to Thee.

[Jan. 1870.]

YOUTH, AND ITS QUESTIONS TO-DAY.

'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'
Matt. xxviii. 20.

THERE are pictures which, to the very close of the artist's work, want a magic touch to make them perfect —one point of light, one spark of brilliant colour. At last the hour comes when all is finished but this. Its addition is not an after-thought; one might say that the picture had been painted with the intention of it in the creator's mind. He adds it; it is but a touch, but it transfigures and completes the work.

Such a touch of finish is my text. All has been told of the Saviour's work—the lowly birth, the quiet ripening years of youth, the entrance into the ministry, the redeeming, revealing ministry itself, the founding of the kingdom, the sacrificial death, the resurrection, the passing into glory, the mission of the disciples to the whole world—and yet the picture is incomplete. 'Of what use,' we say, 'is all this, if the revealer of God and the Saviour of men is gone away from his work and left it in our feeble human hands? What beauty is there in a work which must perish, unsupported by the spirit of its author? The thing is incomplete.' At the very moment that we say this, as we read the

gospel, Christ turns and adds the perfecting conception: 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'

'The end of the world!'—what does it mean? Literally, the conclusion of the age, of this present time-world. There have been many theories with regard to the manner in which this conclusion will take place. But bound up with them all and almost up to the present day, one idea has been constant—the idea of a terrible catastrophe, in which the whole frame of things, with cities, nations, men, shall be dissolved in a fiery ruin, that out of the dissolution a new heaven and a new earth may be upraised.

So constant and unquestioned was this idea, that it had an insensible influence on scientific theories, and the earlier geologists transferred to the past history of the globe the idea of catastrophes. It was said that each new series of life and strata had been ushered in by the total overthrow of the preceding.

Historians shared in the same thought. States and their work, to theoretical eyes, seemed to be absolutely swept away. Assyria, Greece, Rome, perished and left no trace. Catastrophe, convulsion, almost annihilation, marked, they said, the history of earth and the history of man, and the theologians appealed in triumph to this as confirming their theory of the close of the world; unaware, apparently, that it was their own idea, with which they had prejudiced the world, coming back to them again.

But, within the last thirty years, an immense change

has taken place—a change of idea which has spread itself over nearly all the realms of human thought. The idea of uniform evolution has succeeded the idea of violent catastrophe. As geologists ceased to theorise, and looked closer into the history of the earth, the conjectured catastrophes faded away one by one. It was seen that one age slid slowly into another through insensible changes; it was seen that the animal life of the world altered its character even more slowly than the earth itself; that there was no break; that transition, instead of being exceptional, was the rule; that there were, properly speaking, no transition periods; that it was all transition.

The same change of idea waited upon history; nations, it was seen, when facts were examined, did not die suddenly, but decayed. The catastrophe, when it did take place, was the result of inward and slow disease, and did not at all produce annihilation. The elements of the fallen nation lived again in other forms, and entered into the new national life which rose over its ruins. Successive nations were like the succession of forests which we are told clothed Scandinavia in the old days, passing, as the climate changed, from fir to oak, and from oak to beech. Each forest period was new and different from its predecessor, but each drew its life from the elements of the preceding.

In the history of nations, as in the history of the earth, there were no violent transitions. It was seen that each historical era overlapped its successor, and modified it, and that new political systems arose, with a few exceptions, not only *within* but absolutely *out* of

the old. Transition never ceased; it was the law, not the exception.

And now, as a theological idea had insensibly influenced history and science, these in turn have had their revenge, and their idea of slow evolution has insensibly entered into the region of theology.

In most educated men's minds the expectation of a catastrophe of the vast character formerly believed in has utterly passed away. Mankind grows towards its close as the earth grows, as nations have grown; and the close itself of this time-world will not be in a physical ruin, but in the perfection of the race through a slow evolution — on the whole uniform — during which the evil, worldly, and transitory elements will be gradually worked out.

This is the theory, at least, which we embrace. At the same time, this theory does not shut out the possibility of a catastrophe or convulsion now and then occurring, just as we admit the fact of sudden conversions like S. Paul's in the history of spiritual experience. Geologists allow temporary periods of convulsionary action during which rapid changes took place in the crust of the earth. Historians cannot deny that there are instances where nations have sunk, as it were, like ships in a hurricane, and left scarcely a rack behind. And it seems true that the slow progress of the race wants now and then, as our own personal life does, a kind of catastrophe to turn up to the surface elements belonging to mankind which have sunk out of use.

So, taking in all these conditions, we see the human

race going on to an end which is not destruction but perfection. There has been continual change, generally slow, rarely rapid; but on the whole, as we look back, we see growth, not decay, ruling in the history of the race. A Divine Spirit has been living in the world, and will move in it till the close come. It is He who said: 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'

We may live in a time when evolution is more than commonly rapid; or in a time when the world is resting in a kind of Sabbath of progress; or in a time of catastrophe; or when two periods are mingled together, the old overlapping the new. But in whichever stage we live—and each has its own dangers to our spiritual life, the danger of over-excitement in the first, of inactivity of soul in the second, of despair of heart in the third, of confusion of thought in the last, where the mingling of two periods produces that clashing of opinions in which the delightful sense of the constancy of truth is lost—in whichever period we live, our strength in one and all, our shield against their dangers, is faith in this promise of Christ, and the boundless hope and kindling impulse in it: 'Lo, I am with you alway; even unto the end of the world.'

We ourselves live in a time which is called a time of transition, when the old thoughts of men are contending in a sharp battle with the new—so sharp, that the very outsiders and camp-followers of the armies of the world, the idle men and women, take an interest and engage themselves therein in a desultory manner. *Men* and *ideas* astonish and confuse us.

Men of whom we thought little step forward, and, by force of a strong conviction, take a prominent place. Men of low intellect, but of great enthusiasm, gain power. Men whom we trusted as leaders slide back, afraid of the plunge. Men who led our youth, now grown too old to accept the new results of the ideas they have helped to sow, are content to remain fixed in a mould which, once capable of expansion, is now hardening around them. Men who were our ideals, who have given us impulse and hope, disappoint us. Fear or the world touches them, or weaknesses, which had lain latent in their character, arise and taint their purity of purpose. There is no certainty, it seems, in men. We become distrustful and indignant. But it is because we look to men too much, and have not faith in the man Christ Jesus. It matters after all but little how men deceive us. We have one Leader who never disappoints, to whom truth is as dear now as it was to Him on earth, who encompasses our failure with his success, our weakness with his strength, our restlessness with his rest, and lo! He is with us always, even to the end of the world.

Ideas trouble us even more than men. We are hemmed in with a crowd of them, all jostling, fighting with one another, and in the mellay we cannot quite distinguish under what banner to array ourselves. There are ideas, half of the old, half of the new theology, half marble, half living men, like the prince in the Arabian story; and others struggling out of the soil of perished thoughts, like the dead in Tintoret's 'Last Judgment.' There are religious ideas borrowed

from Christianity but which deny Christianity. There are ideas which have all but died, but which are making a last fight for life; there are others just born, which as yet have only interested a few men—and we are in the midst of it all, seeing much we once believed overthrown, and not able as yet to comprehend the new, so that in the noise and mist of the battle, like that last fight of Arthur's beside the Northern Sea, there is

> Confusion, since he saw not whom he fought;
> For friend and foe were shadows in the mist,
> And friend slew friend, not knowing whom he slew;
> And some had visions out of golden youth,
> And some beheld the faces of old ghosts
> Look in upon the battle.

It is hard in a 'dim, weird battle' like this to discover and choose the leading thoughts, whose lights will burn with self-increasing fire, when the fight is over and the mist floats away to the west to die in the daylight of God. An angry feeling, like that of Hamlet, of a duty laid on us too great for our energy, comes upon our heart. It is the anger of weakness. 'Why are we born in such evil times? Why are we called upon to seek, to choose, to distinguish true from false forms of truth? Why have we no peace at heart?' These thoughts are bitter in hours of depression, when illness besets, or life has for a time gone wrong, and then, being natural and transient, they are not undignified. But if they are continued, if they are kept as the sour food which we give the soul at all times, they are unworthy of man and woman. They enslave more rapidly than any other thoughts the free life and

natural movement of the heart and spirit. They injure the will, so that it becomes wavering, the victim of passing thoughts and morbid feelings.

It is then that, remembering our worth as soldiers of mankind, and of mankind made divine in Christ, we should resolve, come what will, to contend with our difficulty till we disentangle truth, till we find the sunlight. And if we do not see our way, if the gloom be too thick for striking, and the noise too loud for thought, it is our wisdom to wait with patience till there be sufficient light for action, nor yet to wail over our fate because we are forced to wait—for more of practical strength, of that latent power which multiplies from itself, comes from restrained endurance than from loosened action.

These thoughts beset us now, when a natural instinct makes us pause to consider human life. And from the large and abstract thoughts we sweep back to ourselves and look upon our personal life. We are like men, to-day, who have just crested a ridge in a mountain journey. Behind us is the valley of the past year; before is another valley and another ridge, over which our path lies this coming year. We rest upon the summit for retrospect and prospect, for contemplation and for hope.

We look back. We have had our catastrophes; our hours of rest; our awakenings at the touch of new thoughts or the advent of new friends; our secret bitterness, our hours of loneliness, perhaps of despair; our visions of ideal joy; hopes too wild for fulfilment, but which left their sting of pleasure; efforts after noble

ends which failed, but whose failure, since the aim was so divine, has done our hearts more good than many a poor success; sins which, as we look back, seem to have left an indelible stain upon our lives. Thoughts, feelings, events crowd upon our memory. We have scarcely breath for quiet thought.

There is one question which we must ask ourselves, and force the heart into sufficient calm to answer. Has there been growth? If so, catastrophes of heart or life, sorrows, sins and failures, are practically nothing in the balance. They are dead; let the dead bury their dead. We have the right in Christ to shake them off and start afresh. The serpent does not keep the fragments of his old skin hanging about his new enamel. No more should we. If we feel that we have gained even one new impulse towards good, that even one sin is weaker than it was, we are licensed to claim forgiveness; and God loves the faithful violence which claims it and in the claim gains life enough to begin again.

True, we may not be able to distinguish growth. Our eyes have too many tears in them to see clearly, our vision of the past is too close to allot to things their true proportion. For we cannot see after one year the growth of the oak, we only see the scars where some great boughs have been torn away by the tempest. But the thin ring of bark which we do not see is the important matter, the riven branches are unimportant in comparison.

And if Christ's spirit has been with us even in one additional aspiration which has led to action, then it is faithlessness and cowardice to sit down upon the

ridge and wring our hands over the past. Out of that nothing ever comes; but out of faith and the effort of the soul, and 'no continuance of weak-mindedness,' arises the strong, if tearful, resolution to go forward trusting in the strength and forgiveness of Him who is with us always, even to the end of the world.

It may be, however, that other elements have come into our life which give us real reasons for dismay. There are times when a strange thing happens to us—when old evils, old temptations which we thought we had conquered, which had died out of our lives, arise again, and we tremble with the thought that past effort has been in vain, that sins cannot have been forgiven because they appear again.

But there may be an explanation even of this. I cannot but think that it is not always a note of retrogression, but often a note of growth. First, it is not an experience which comes to unaspiring spirits. It belongs especially to those who are possessed with the desire to advance; to pass beyond the bounds of mortal thought and find the fount of Truth. The very fact that we are conscious of it, and feel its bitterness, proves that the soul is sensitive and on the watch; and such a soul cannot be going backwards. It will gird up its loins for battle, and disperse these foes. They have been already beaten; they will fly again before spiritual courage.

Again, this resurrection of evil things and thoughts may in itself be caused, not by any cessation of growth, but by the progress of growth itself. When a field has been well cleared, and the upper soil purified,

it will produce but a few weeds. But if in after-years the plough is driven deep through it and the under soil upturned, old weeds will reappear. Their latent seeds are nourished into life by the sunlight and the rain. It is the same with us. If a catastrophe of sorrow has come in the past year and upturned the foundations of life—if a new idea, or a change in the circumstances of existence, has shaken or torn up our inner life—we must expect that old evils and old temptations will startle us by their resurrection, just as in a nation's revolution, evils which had seemed dead arise for a time again. But they arise *because* the soil has been upturned, they arise because a revolution has taken place, they arise because there is life enough in the soul not to be content with old things, even though the peace of them was pleasant. They mark the beginning of a new era of progress, destined, by its own rush of novel life, to extinguish the last remnants of these evils and to be triumphant, if we have faith and courage to say, and act upon our speech, 'Lo! He is with me always, even to the end of the world.'

Once more. It is becoming the fashion among persons who take one-sided opinions from science, and talk of law without investigating the operation of nature, to say, that there is no such thing as forgiveness of sins, no healing for error. It is the gospel declaration, its first and last declaration, that sins are forgiven; and instead of being a declaration belonging only to Christianity, it is supported by observation of nature, by the history of science, by the history of the world, by the experience of men. Only, the forgiveness is not

the annihilation of the sin, it is its transmutation; it does not arise out of ignoring, but out of accepting its existence, out of looking it firmly in the face, and resolving to use it as a means of conquering itself.

We see forgiveness in nature. She redeems her evil when she makes fertile soil from the ashes of the volcano, and covers her ruin with meadow, flowers, and vines. Her prodigal effort creates new beauty out of her devastation, and the beauty is richer for the evil, and by the evil. The hurricane has laid waste the forest, but it is only the decaying trees and those whose lofty and overarching heads shut out the light which perish. A few years after, the pardon of nature fills the rents of ruin with young plants, rejoicing in the air and the light. The running fire has devoured the prairie, it lies before us a coal-black plain. Next year it is of a fresher green, the flowers have livelier hues. The roots were untouched, the rain has washed into the earth the carbon and nitrogen, and the bounteous forgiveness of nature has made a lovelier life out of the very elements of her unkindness.

But as this analogy is open to attack, let us take another. The history of science is the history of exhausted errors. One after another their impossibility was demonstrated. All the mistakes possible to be made with regard to the system of the universe were made. Were they unforgiven? They were necessary steps in the progress of knowledge; one after another they were found out, and their forgiveness was secured when men, having experienced and rejected all the errors, rested securely in the truth. The same law

holds good in the history of national progress. Nations advance through exhausting errors, and, as they find them out, paving with them the path of their progress, till full forgiveness is realised in the attainment of true forms of government. But the true was found only through knowing and conquering the false.

To come to the experience of men. Who are the men who succeed in a noble manner, who influence the nation's heart, who advance her commerce, who rule her thought? They are those who can rise out of failure and shake it off; who when they err, accept their error, and say, 'Now I know where I am weak, *that* I will never do again;' who look their sin straight in the face, and say, 'It is bad and vile, but it can be redeemed by effort, lived down by perseverance in good;' who do not despair and hide their face in a cowardly remorse, but who believe that the world forgives sins if it sees determined action towards their opposite; who make their mistakes, their failures, the stepping-stones to their success.

And shall we, because we have laid hold of half a truth, that results cannot be changed, forget the other half—that if we change, results, though remaining the same, change to us?—shall we in our spiritual life deny the lesson of nature, and of history, and of human life, and fold our hands and say, 'There is no forgiveness'?

It is true, as they say, that results cannot be changed; that they follow upon sins by unalterable law. But the forgiveness of sins is not in taking away punishment, but in changing the heart with which we meet punishment. Everyone knows in life how different are

the effects of suffering when it comes on us from one we hate or from one we love. When we are angry with God, the natural results of our sins produce in us hardness, hatred, and misunderstanding of Him. But when we are led to love Him, the same results, not changed in themselves, but changed to us, for we are changed, lead us to penitence, to love of God, to cast our care and life upon Him. That is forgiveness of sins. Their moral burden is removed, and their inevitable results become means of good.

Moreover, everyone knows that there is such a thing as forgiveness. We have the word, we use it day by day; is there no fact which answers to it? Friends have forgiven us our wrongs to them, and greater love has followed on forgiveness. We forgive our children, even when they sting us most bitterly; and does God never rise to the height of the human nature He has made? Is the Father's charity below the children's?

Therefore, I say, because we may redeem the past in Christ, let us go forward with the patience and effort of men. We will not despair while we are wise, nor let the soul in utter faithlessness commit the sin of Judas. God is mightier than our evil, too loving for our sins. We shall be punished, but healed through the punishment.

Again, we turn and look upon the valley of the past year. There, below, are the spots stained by our evil and our fear. But as we look, a glow of sunshine breaks upon the past, and in the sunshine is a soft rain falling from the heaven. It washes away the stain. The spell is broken which kept us weeping on the ridge.

The phantom cloud of sins, errors, failures, melts away in the growing light, and from the purity of the upper sky a voice seems to descend and enter our sobered heart: 'My child, go forward, abiding in faith, hope, and love;' for 'lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'

[Jan. 1870.]

YOUTH, AND ITS HOPE OF PROGRESS.

'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'
Matt. xxviii. 20.

We stood last Sunday on the ridge which divides the valley of the old year from the valley of the new. To-day we have passed away from the summit and begun the unknown descent. Every step brings us and the nation and the world into a new position, into scenes similar, it may be, to those we have passed by, but never identical. It was right the last time we met here to look back, that we might gather into a practical form the experiences and lessons of the vanished year. It is equally right now to look forward, that we may understand our feelings, clear our hopes from errors, and muster the armies of the soul in disciplined array for action. We have indulged ourselves enough in retrospect. While we are as yet upon the upper ledges of the hills, we will indulge ourselves in prospect. But we cannot see clearly; the mist closes and opens in the vale below. Strange voices come up to us from the world beneath, phantom tones of weeping and of mirth; notes whose sound we do not know, of friends whom we shall make in the coming journey, of events

which will alter the movement of life, of passions as yet unstirred within us which may waken into being. Mystery lies upon the future, but mystery has its charm as well as its pain, and conjecture its subtile delight as well as its delicate dread.

To what are we descending? Whom shall we meet in the path? What joy to transfigure life, what sorrow to paralyse it, shall we encounter? These are questions which the soul insists on forming, but which it fears to form. We are tempted to lie down and rest, to shut down the lid of life, to quench aspiration because of its trouble, and thought because of its weariness.

> Let us alone, what pleasure can we have
> To war with evil? Is there any peace
> In ever climbing up the climbing wave?

But the soul, mindful of the imperial palace whence it came, indignantly denies the lotus-eater's thought. Christ speaks in our spirit and echoes the denial, too weak, perhaps, to last when unsupported. There falls upon our ears the promise which brings Divine strength to human feebleness: 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'

Of our own personal looking forward and its aims I do not speak to-day. Our subject is, how, and to what we should look forward over the world of men.

To whom was the promise given?—that is a question which will clear our way. It was given to the nucleus of the infant Church, the eleven Apostles of Christ. But—and this is the point—it was given not to them alone, but to all men in them. For they held their apostolic office as representatives of the race, not as

persons divided from the race. They were men whose work was to hand on their apostleship, till by apostolic work there should be no further need of apostles; just as government is to be transmitted till, by just laws and wise execution of laws, there is no further need of government. They were privileged for the purpose of destroying privilege. They were chosen out of mankind in order that all mankind might be included in their number.

So the promise is to them, and *in them* to the whole race. The moment they or any of their followers lost sight of this, and claimed the promise as especially or only theirs—claimed the privilege it gave of ministering to men as a privilege which gave them the power of lording over men, claimed it as isolating them into a class apart from men, claimed it as giving a right, and not as imposing a duty—that moment it was taken away from them till they repented, that moment their use decayed and they were turned into a curse. They were blessed and a blessing only when they came like the Son of Man, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, as sons of men, not as lords of men.

'Lo, I am with you alway,' was said by representative Mankind to the mankind He represented. And this is in accordance with a theory I have frequently laid down. Not certain portions of mankind were taken by Christ into the Divine nature, but the whole. When the universal Word entered into man, He could not take only any particular manhood into Himself. That which He took must be as universal as the thing taken could be by its nature. There was a

necessity, which I might almost call logical, of the Divine Word assuming to Himself, not a manhood, but mankind. Christ is then Humanity. His being is bound up with mankind's, or rather, mankind's in Him. Hence it is with a kind of horror that we hear any limitation of this promise, and with righteousness that we hate the opinions of those who claim it as alone their own. For it is an attack upon the entireness of Christ. If He is not with *all* Mankind even to the end of the world, He is not with Himself.

But if He be with mankind as He is with Himself, present through and in the ages as their heart and brain, then He is the source whence evolution flows. And because He is perfect, therefore the race evolves towards perfection, and evolution towards perfection is progress. We look forward, then, as Christians, and as citizens of the world, to the constant progress of mankind. We believe that the progress has been constant up to the present time. There have been, necessarily, some catastrophes, some convulsions, some recessions of the tide; but they were recessions which sent the wave of freshening liberty higher on the strand.

It is characteristic of some religious persons who restrict the universality of Christ, to deny that there has been any progress of the race. 'The world is not a bit better than it was; if anything, it is worse. There is great material and intellectual progress, but there is no moral or spiritual progress.'

But when we examine the progress of the whole of mankind, we must examine not facts occurring here and there, for these are of little moment, but the ideas which

direct the nations; not the petty perturbations of the orbit, but the vast sweep of the orbit itself; not the advance or the contrary of a year or a decade, but whether in so many centuries men have attained to a higher sphere of thought, and act, in mass, on larger and freer principles.

It is impossible to bring forward one half of the proofs of such a progress, but one is enough. It is plain to those who read history more for the sake of human ideas than for its statistics, that many of the ideas which restricted the equal freedom of men, which implicitly denied the two great universal ideas of Christianity, that all men are alike God's children, that all men are brothers in Christ, have been slowly dying away and are now rapidly dying. In the decay of these, progress is seen; in looking forward to their ruin is our best hope; in proving that their ruin is contained in Christianity is the reconciliation between the world and Christianity. And, in fact, the whole current of history has set against them; the force of God in man is opposed to them. They are sinking ships. Some have already sunk, and the waves of human freedom have rolled over them with joy. The moment Christ proclaimed the oneness of the race, their doom was sealed, but not accomplished. Their final overthrow was left to the slow work of man, century after century.

Some ask, why God did not get rid of these evils by an exercise of omnipotence. It is a foolish question. There is only one way in which man can get rid of an evil, and that is by exhausting it. We cannot get the answer to our question, 'What is right?' till

we have held fast and battled with the Proteus of evil through every alteration of his form. We must work through all possible errors before we find the perfect good. But we should exhaust them much sooner if we held fast to the primary ideas which Christ gave to men. I do not think that anyone can now deny that the ruin of such ideas as the divine right of kings, privileged classes, imperialism, dogmatism and its child intolerance, the tyranny of priesthoods over the souls of men, papal infallibility, the godhead of capital, is logically contained in the doctrines of the universal Fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man. There is no need of peculiarly sharp eyes to see that these have been perishing, and one of the things we have to look forward to with joy and triumph in the coming year is new blows being dealt upon them—honest, downright, and, I hope, merciless blows. Imperialism is becoming weaker and weaker, and with its fall 'divine right' will receive a deadlier stroke than we may at first imagine. There is less dogmatism and intolerance in religious circles, and they are trying now to find a home in irreligious circles. Few things are worse than the dogmatism of those who boast of being undogmatic and the intolerance of those who want to make everybody tolerant by violence of words and bitterness of satire. The way in which young atheism speaks of the 'old religions' has a delicious twang of Pharisaism about it and a naïveté of intolerance which is irresistibly humorous. But I hope that by falling back on Christianity we may work out of society the intolerance of pretentious tolerance and the dogmatism

of infidel circles of thought. This ought to be the work of the liberal church school.

Priest power over the souls of men never reached in England the same height that it has done abroad. The disease came sooner to the surface on the Continent, and in Germany, Austria, Italy, and Spain, its race seems to be run. Here, not having exhausted all its forms so rapidly, it has suffered a galvanic resurrection; but as soon as we have absorbed into society the good elements in its evil, it will go back to its grave and lie there undisturbed. In Ireland it is worse than ever, but the worse it grows the nearer draws its end. All tyranny is doomed by its very nature to become more tyrannical, and in that lies latent its destruction. Mankind, like God, is very long-suffering, but when a certain point is reached, it rises and casts the devil out of its body. When priestly power in Ireland meddles with education and limits its further growth, the Irish, who have a passion for education, will at last arise and do as Austria has done. It may take ten, twenty, or thirty years, but who cannot foresee the end?

Papal infallibility will receive its death-blow on the day that it is proclaimed, and I hope it may be proclaimed. There are some victories which are irremediable ruin.

Privileged classes, whose claims are so tenacious of life abroad, but which were always healthily opposed here, and many of which are now being heartily surrendered, will less and less press their demands and throw themselves on an equal footing with other classes into the arena of life. And this will be their wisdom, for the

history of privilege is the history of the destruction of those who claimed it. There is one privilege, however, as rampant as ever. It is the privilege some assume to themselves of living a life of mere amusement, while the rest of the world is working. They lounge, they visit one another, they gossip, they drift uselessly about, they claim the right of being served and not serving, of taking and not contributing. They are the worst thieves the world has, and the worst tyrants. For they rob the world of the leisure which would be saved were they to do their work, and of the capital which might be made productive did they not squander it, and theirs is the true maxim of all tyrants: 'The world was made for us, and not we for the world.'

It is their lives which give sharpness and poison to all the bitter feelings which the poorer have against the richer classes.

Against all these things the first principles of Christ are contending; and they shall conquer, for He is with mankind, even to the end.

This is the progress we look forward to, and when men begin to understand that this is the work of Christ's thought, they will turn to Him not only as Master of souls, but as King of nations.

It is useless to object that Christianity has been the hireling of these retrograde and deathful things. Everyone knows the uses to which priests and kings and mobs have put Christianity; but they were obliged to travesty it first, and it is gross injustice to call these travesties Christianity. It marks that unfairness of intellect which is the characteristic note of intolerance.

Truth is a good thing, but if a man of ill-temper sets himself to tell everyone truly what he thinks of them, to expose all their failures, to lay bare all their wounds, that sort of truth is a hateful thing. But we do not cease for all that to reverence truth, because this persecuting person has caricatured it. And when we have got to think for ourselves, and ceased to put our religion into the hands of persons whom we get to make it up for us into a system which we swallow whole, we may have the common sense and the fairness to say, 'I want to find out for myself what Christ really did say. I will listen no more to the scholars and their Christianities which they set up to fight with one another. I will go and listen to the Master Himself, and "learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly of heart, and I shall find rest to my soul.'" Why, is it not wonderful how a single text like that—falling like dew upon the land of the heart, swept dry and tearless by the bitter winds of controversy—disposes at once of all the attacks made upon Christianity, by proving that these haughty and tyrannical Christianities were not Christianity at all? When were they meek and lowly of heart?—when did they ever give rest to the soul?

And it is a proof of the intense vitality of the true Christianity that it has survived all these false images of it, that in the midst of systems diametrically contradictory of the idea of its Founder, thousands lived divinely and died bravely by the faith they had in Christ. In the midst of difficulties such as no other religion had to contend with, difficulties which came from

monstrous and misshapen changelings which claimed to be the true children of Christ's teaching, it produced such a band of holy and human men that, with everything apparently against it, it has advanced, and in it the world. It presses still forward, clothed with many of the rags with which men have insisted on disguising its perfect form, and the dogs still bay around it and tear at the ragged drapery, but the time will come when we shall see it undisguised, clothed only in the light of God, in perfect beauty; and 'at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow.'

What are all these particular religions to its vast universality? What are these laborious and subtile systems to its profound simplicity? What are all theories of government of the people to its divine Humanity, which embraces every man, without respect of persons, in the limitless love of God the Father, and knits each man to his neighbour in the universal brotherhood of Christ, and passes on to say, with an onward look to something not realised as yet, that a national God exists no longer, but a universal God? The true progress of the race is hidden in the thoughts of Christ.

We look forward, then, upon this 'bank and shoal of time,' to the destruction of all false conceptions of the relations of God to man and of man to man; to the hail which will sweep away the lingering remnants of every idea which limits, isolates, and tyrannises over men. For the Redeemer is with us always—even to the end of the world.

But we must not expect that this will be done quickly

or easily. In the midst of evolution catastrophes will occur—are, in fact, part of progress, inasmuch as they turn up to the surface new and needful elements. Sometimes, when the evil is deep and long-continued, and especially when it is painted by hypocrisy to look like good, the forward step cannot be made without the sun being turned into darkness. We have learned from France last century, and from America in this, that 'without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.' We are ourselves learning in Ireland that we cannot reverse the injustice and oppression of centuries—with the best intentions in the world—in forty or fifty years; that the attempt to heal aggravates for a time the evil, and produces a period of partial catastrophe. But, whatever happens, we must not be fearful and unbelieving, and turn round upon our principles because their result has surprised some of us. We have but two things to live by, if we are to be true to Christ—that God is the Father of all men, and that men are brothers in Christ; and our work, to which we are bound to be faithful unto death, is to carry those out as logically as we can—consistently with the necessary gradualness of progress—in national government and in international politics as well as in the inner kingdom of the soul. We may be obliged to stay our hand, but never to retreat from our position. We have precedent for the one—'I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now'—but there is no precedent for the other. No matter how loud the storm, or the confusion, we must not give back through a shameful fear of catastrophe. The disturbance we dread may be the very thing

required to bring to the surface the elements needed to regenerate the country.

The same things are true in the case of the religious ferment of which I spoke last Sunday and in the seething midst of which we live. Look boldly into it, and you will see that it tends to two things especially,—the claiming by men of their personal rights as sons of God and brothers one of another, independent of all religious systems which assert a divine right to peculiar privileges; the claiming by men of their duty to pursue after truth whithersoever it may lead them, without any limitation being fixed on the work of their intellect and conscience except that which is supplied, not from without by command of a church or a sect, but from within, by the intuition and feelings of their spirit.

But he who makes these claims must expect to get into troubled water. It is a very different thing to seek after God for yourself, and to take your God upon authority. You may have a comfortable life of it, though a degrading one, with the latter; you will have a very hard life of it with the other, but it will be the ennobling life of a warrior. And if you choose the noble life, there ought to be no continued complaining. Moments of depression there must be, moments when the noise of the contest and the confusion of doubtful thoughts bring with a sense of despair a passionate cry for rest, but we must not loiter long in that sickly state. If we have chosen to be free, we must act like freemen; we must not be slaves to our fear of catastrophe, or slaves to our spiritual sloth. We must go forward into the strife, uplifting our souls to God in

prayer, trusting in the promise that though the stress is hard, He is with us always.

Let no man or woman think, who is still young, on whom the necessary calm of age has not fallen, that they will have a quiet life, if they are in earnest, for many years to come, either in the world without or in the world within them. Development must have its rude shocks, evolution its transient earthquakes, progress its backslidings. Accept the necessity, count the cost, make ready to take your part in the things which are coming on the earth. Be true to the vast Christian principles of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man; steadily go to war with every opinion and system which tends to limit them and to enslave men. But in fighting against systems and opinions, do not be betrayed yourselves into intolerance of men, into inability to see the good in the evil, into any statement or action which may practically deny that the men whose views you oppose are children of God and your brethren in Christ. Constantly keep your temper in the battle; guard jealously your power of looking on all sides of questions; watch over yourself that you may be above all things just to men and their opinions. Clear your minds from narrowness—the narrowness of religion, the narrowness of scepticism, the narrowness of intellectual vanity; keep yourself apart from particular sets of men and opinion. They tend to fix you down, to limit your life, to fetter your thought, to make you wise in your own conceits. See that you mix with men your brothers, with those who differ from yourselves, who oppose and contradict you. Do not ride at anchor in a

safe and landlocked bay, in cultured comfort of thought, having put aside all troublesome questions of the unknown. You cannot quench the spirit within you, without making the intellect one-sided and the conscience intolerant or dull. Rather tempt the ocean paths and sail on to a boundless horizon, gaining strength from trial of your skill, wisdom from the storms of life, tenderness from its sorrows, love from assisting others, and faith in the final issue from the clear inward consciousness that you are growing up into all that is best in human nature, into all that is of Christ. Progress is the law of the world, it is the law which ought to rule our lives. See that you are an active part of the great evolution of the race. What matters after all—the catastrophes, the convulsions of heart and intellect which you must suffer, the shattered sail, the midnight watch in the hurricane, the loneliness of the mid-ocean? It is life at least, it is more, it is moving with the movement of the world, and the world is moving in Christ.

We look forward, then, with a joy which trembles at itself and with a hope which is inexhaustible for man. The proper Man is with us; the ideal Mankind walks hand in hand with the imperfect mankind. The spirit of universal freedom and truth and justice is moving in the ages. He moves the world on slowly—slowly to us; but what are a thousand years to Him?—and consider, He has to save not a sect, or a church, or a few favourites, but all mankind.

The wider your view of Christ's salvation, the more reconciled you will be to the slowness of progress; the

slower you see progress to be, the more rational becomes your hope that all are to be made perfect, even as their Father.

Therefore, because the future is—though mysterious—full of divine will towards good, go forward with a cheerful countenance. God keep us faithful to Him, true to one another, and universal in spirit, in the time to come.

Take these thoughts with you for the year; go down into the valley with your brothers, and work them out in life. We cannot tell our fate, but our fate matters but little if Man be going on to good. The mist sleeps over the valley beneath, but it is transparent to the eye of faith, and through it we see the river of progress

> Roll o'er Elysian fields its amber stream,

and the notes of a great harmony fall upon our ears, sweet and world-compelling as the voice of Christ, when He said, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'

THE PRESENTIMENTS OF YOUTH.

'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'
Matt. xxviii. 20.

Do any of us remember the hour, when leaving home and school and the boy's life behind us, we came to the great university with an eager heart? The first night in the antique place, how wonderfully we were stirred by it! As we looked out of our window on the still quadrangle, the moonlight poured out like water on the grave buildings and the grass, and heard the bells answering one another in the vocal air, it seemed as if the place were alive with all the dead. The thousand forms of famous men who thither came with unborn thoughts within them, which born, should move the world to passion and to power, appeared to thrill the air with their unseen presence. A strange low crying, as of souls who had died here in their enthusiasm and never seen their hope, slid by upon the wind. The silence was eloquent with those secrets which are told to hearts that listen in the hour of presentiment, secrets which, though they seem our own thoughts, are, it may be, impressions from that silent world of souls of which our intellect knows nothing but our heart so much. As we dreamed our dream, hope and fear, enthusiasm and

depression, interchanged their glow and gloom within us. The past life—home and school and childhood—vanished for a time; we seemed to have been asleep and only now to have awakened. And with what a loosened rein we rode forward into the unknown fields of the future! Should it be failure or success, fame or wasted life, enthusiasm deepening into work or grown craven in the chill of difficulty; pleasure decaying into pain or pain growing into the pleasure of conquest? What companions, what friendships, what changes, what impulses should we gain and leave and suffer? A few years, and what sentence should we pass on the life of youth?—progress or retrogression?

It is gone, that time, but its past passions and presentiments come back again and again in life, come, most often, men have thought, at the beginning of a year. I do not know that one time or another is more full of them, for they are of the heart, in whose kingdom there is neither time nor space, but it is convenient to speak of them now; to-day, of the look forward over our own life, as last Sunday over the world of men.

Progress is our aim, growth in noble things, development of every human power to perfection. I assume that this is your aspiration and your effort. Some prefer the base contentment of the Circœan island to the uncontented toil of Ulysses on the wandering sea. To those I do not speak to-day. The time will come when God will speak to them in pain and horror of themselves, and plague them with sore despair, if not here, at least in that undiscovered country where the inevitable law of progress will force them forward till

they begin to enjoy the self-development they hated, and growth become delight, not pain. But to those who still aspire, in whom desire of the better life is still alive, who look forward in hope that some faint grace of progress may mark the year, we speak this day.

God will look after our education. We may have to suffer from catastrophe, we may be destined to joy; we may undergo the confusion and the pain of an inner change in the slow or swift development of a crisis in our life.

These three, catastrophe, joy and change, to either or to all of these we look forward in this hour of presentiment.

We take them one by one, we ask if the forecasting of them has anything to tell us. And first, the presentiments of catastrophe, is there any good in them? Has God been unfair to us in leaving them in our nature?

I think, when they are presentiments regarding others, that they make our life more delicate. They give a finer edge to noble passions. Love becomes dearer through the dream of loss, the joy of friendship more exquisite from our sense of its transiency. There are times when the dearest affection and the closest friendship weary; we have exhausted one side of them and have not yet found the other. We are tempted then to half-rudenesses, small cruelties, want of thoughtfulness; but these are softened back into affection when we think that we may lose all in a moment, and only the memory of the wrong we have done remain. 'In a year all may be over: let me be more gentle, more loving, more faithful; more attentive to the slight courtesies

and thoughtful cares and pleasant speeches which make up the sum of life. While I have time let me give all I can. A few more smiles of silent sympathy, a few more tender words, a little more restraint on temper may make all the difference between happiness and half-happiness to those I live with.' And if the presentiment of loss do this, it does a gracious work. It brings the heart and life into greater harmony with Him who loved the little kindnesses, which given, make their recollected hours the favourite haunt of memory.

But if the presentiment of catastrophe be for ourselves, it ought to make our inner life more delicate. More delicate, inasmuch as there are so many pleasant and gracious possibilities in our own nature which we neglect to educate. We might see so much more beauty if we willed it. We might cause many unknown feelings to flower if we were not in such a hurry to feel strong ones. We miss in the swing of excitement many opportunities of giving sympathy in little things to those we love, which if they had been used, would have added finer fancies, subtiler and sweeter shades to our power of feeling. So many thoughts are just touched and laid aside, half thought and then forgotten, that it is pitiable how much is wasted in ourselves. We go through the meadows of our own hearts crushing with a careless step the flowers.

There is no need to walk so fast. Tread more delicately, more thoughtfully—lest when the catastrophe comes you find too late that you have not got the good out of your own nature which you might have done.

It may be said that this puts a drag upon the duty

of devoting life with activity to one aim. But I feel that there is no fear of this being left unpreached, and moreover that it may be preached too much. Activity may become feverish; the rush of life may leave no time for the restoring quiet of gentle happiness. We save ourselves from weariness and satiety by being quieter in the march, more delicate in our appreciation of the wayside thoughts and tenderness of life. And our activity does not really suffer from this temperance in the use of it—from our keeping a Sabbath now and then in the inner life. On the contrary, it lasts longer, it lives to old age, is healthier in its work, more clear-sighted in its aim.

This is the good of presentiments of catastrophe. They minister, if we are wise, to progress, by giving a greater finish, a more adorned completeness, to the work of life.

But there is one warning necessary; when we find that they refine the feelings and make subtiler the thought, we sometimes tend towards indulging in them with excess. We do not take them as they come, we create them for the delicate pleasure and the refinement of spirit they afford. They cease then to be natural and become æsthetic.

The punishment of that is swift. Feeling is over-refined, and the pleasure is so keen that we do well to suspect that it may be the keenness which comes of incipient disease. But we have got the habit and go on. At last, the pain passes into mortification, and, do what we will, we can feel these subtile things no more. For

the more delicate nerves of the heart do not bear much playing on. They are killed by over-exercise, and with their death all the exquisiteness of life passes away;—all the good which might come of presentiment of sorrow is lost.

And now, to turn round our thought, if the catastrophe which we imagine should really come in the ensuing year, I do not think that the mode of living of which I speak is a bad preparation for it. For such a way of life brings three things with it: self-sacrifice in thoughtfulness for others; temperance in the indulgence of feeling; watchfulness for the small blessings of life. These things are good qualities to have when suffering sweeps over the soul. Sorrow is selfish, but we have learnt to live in others, and watch for the love of others; sorrow is hardening because it exhausts feeling, but we have learnt to be temperate in the indulgence of feeling; sorrow makes life a darkness which may be felt, but we have learnt to look for God's love in little rays of light. We can then meet catastrophe and make progress out of it. And it ought to minister to progress. For, as I have said already, it upturns the soil of life and brings new elements to the surface. We see this even in the outward frame of those who have met a great change without being crushed or hardened by it. We meet them after the wave of pain has passed over them, and there is a new expression in their eye, a new movement upon their lip, a new distinction on the brow as if the crown of thorns had rested there; the very walk has a new dignity

and the attitude a new intelligence. They are changed, we say.

So is it with the soul. Subtile changes take place within it, changes for good, if we have been true to the manhood of Christ, to trust in the Fatherhood of God. A new river of tenderness has broken upwards from the under-ground of the soul and flows forth to fertilise the older thoughts and feelings into a richer life, with new colours in the flowers they bear. The blood-red plant of pain grows among the brighter flowers of our happiness; but its presence makes us gentler in life, more dependent upon God and nearer to Christ. A strange, new power of inward tears softens without weakening all the ruder qualities of our nature. Certain sins, certain temptations, cease altogether to trouble us. Some way or other they have disappeared for ever. We are less worried by little things, less anxious for the morrow, less absorbed in the present world. The one great pain has freed us from smaller pains; the one great shadow on this world has made us lift our eyes to the eternal shining of the other. And strange to say, this carelessness of the present life is not less enjoyment, less delicacy of happiness, but more; for the carelessness is for the ignoble things—for wealth, and the passion of excitement; not for the noble things—for delight in human greatness, for the beauty of our Father's world, for the blessing of love and friendship. These being seen with new feelings are seen with new exquisiteness in them.

Therefore, if you be destined to catastrophe, let it work in you new development. Remember we are not

left alone to meet our sorrow. One is with us who works with us. Our presentiment may be His note of warning to His child, and with the dark prophecy is linked the promise, 'Lo, I am with you always.'

Secondly, are we ready for the progress which ought to grow out of joy? We look forward to joy this year, but there can be no progress got out of it if we seek to drain it dry in a moment. We need temperance in our delight. Some plunge their whole face into the rose of joy, and become drunk with the scent, but in doing so they crush their rose and break it from its stem. The leaves wither, the colour dies, the freshness of the perfume fades, their pleasure is gone.

The wiser man prefers to keep his rose of joy upon its stem; to visit its beauty not all at once but day by day, that he may have it cool and in the dew. He likes to go from leaf to leaf, understanding the individuality of every petal, slowly increasing pleasure, till at last he gets to the heart of the flower and possesses its last and sweetest odour. In this way all the past delights which he has had from leaf to leaf are kept, and go to swell the perfect enjoyment. And this pleasure is greater than his who has crushed his pleasure into a moment, for it is more experienced, more complex, and more delicate. And being so, it also possesses permanence. It has not been destroyed by intemperate handling. It is, after many days, as fresh as when its happy finder first discovered it. And if, residing at its heart, its whole influence of odour and colour should threaten to grow so overpowering as to make satiety thereof a danger, he leaves the central cup and goes

back to wander among the leaves again, till re-enjoying the lesser delights, he can take back a quiet heart to re-enjoy the greatest.

Suppose a new friendship enters into your life. If the man or woman is worth anything to you, they ought to be worth a great deal. They ought to advance and quicken your development as you theirs. They ought to make you more complex, more sympathetic with the great Mankind. One knows—he is a poor person who does not—how delightful the first rush of feeling is, when as yet we only hope we have found another friend, another soul which can touch ours. Old things become new; it is like dew upon a thirsty meadow. Fresh faculties are developed, a fresh eagerness seizes on the old. The dull places of the spirit suffer an enchantment. Music—'sounds which give delight and hurt not'—play about the path of life. We look forward to exploring a new soul, as men who have found a new continent. But, if led by this early impetuosity, we rush, without any waiting thought, into the world on whose verge we stand, we miss all the good of it. We neglect the delicate shades of feeling and thought which give permanent interest to a character. Our rush is wanting in reverence, and the soul we attempt to know recoils and hides itself. We seek only the one great point of character which attracts us; we attain it and it is all over. It is like men who, inspired by the mountain passion, hurry to the top and never pause by the wayside beauty of the path. They come down tired out; they have learnt nothing; they go away next day.

I think this is unbearable intemperance of character; it is worse; it is an insolence done to the natural privacy of the soul; it is a waste of the blessing and pleasure which God wished to give us in friendship. There is no progress to be gained from it; no lessons to be learnt, no new elements to be developed in us. We lose everything by hurry. Above all, we lose our friends, supposing we have won them for a time. They feel that there has been no real comprehension of their character, only knowledge of one or two things in them. They will slowly fall away from us, they cannot help it. And then, when all has been lost, the punishment is sharp. We feel that we have not been strong enough to win or keep the good God gave us: nor can we enjoy the memory even of the pleasure we have had, for unproductive pleasure leaves pain behind it.

It is the wisdom of life, on the contrary, to receive our friends as from the hand of God, and to give to the task of understanding them the same trouble as we give to the comprehension of the thoughts of God in nature; to work out the drama of our love and friendship subject to the primary feeling in the mind of Christ, reverence for the human soul. Then, in the midst of the new enjoyment which they bring us, we shall find additional power of progress, and the delights of life will be as much an element of our evolution towards good as its sorrows.

Lastly, we look forward to change, sometimes with exultation, sometimes with dread; with the former in youth, with the latter in manhood.

That prophetic joy with which youth foresees and welcomes change of light and shade in life, and happi-

ness in every change—what man among us, who knows what after-life becomes, would rudely dash its exultation? It is the spring vitality which sends the sap streaming upwards to fill to overflowing every channel, to nourish the remotest fibre, of the tree of life. Make the most of it, lay up your store of joy, prophesy a famous future in a golden dream of hope, for the power does not come twice. But oh! keep it pure. Let thought and feeling, as they range forward in triumph, be hallowed by the knowledge that you are the child of God, and called to be His servant from change to change. Live from one varied scene to another as if you felt the presence of Him who is with you always, even to the end of the world. For there is no sadness so unutterable as that which comes of the self-destruction of our youthful prophecies; of the change of exultation, as years go on, into slothfulness and depression. It is a terrible thing to look back, an outworn man, upon the past and be ashamed of our early inspiration, to see our bright-haired youth go by us like a phantom, and to hide our face and cry: That is what I was, what might I not have been! Once, 'bounded in a nutshell, I could count myself a king of infinite space, but now I have bad dreams.'

There are some who fall so hopelessly from this ideal that there is nothing more for them in this life. They must wait till, transferred to a fairer clime, they have, so to speak, another chance. But for others who still retain enough of purity, enough of vitality to begin afresh, there is forgiveness to be won; they look forward unto change again. But they have received a rude shock,

and, though they know change must come, so much has gone from them, that it is no longer with exultation, but with a kind of dread, that manhood prefigures any change of life. We fear the loss of interest in existence, the decay of intellect, the coming of satiety, the long disease of age. We fear still more the possible approach of uniformity, of day after day the same, of the burden and apathy of decay. We fear change for the losses it may bring if it shatter us too much, yet we fear the absence of change still more.

But why should we fear when He is with us always, even to the end? We nourish no longer, as in youth, a proud self-dependence. We have a spiritual Presence within us whom we have made our own, and whose dearest work is our development. We know Him who went from change to change and in whom the ideal life grew ever brighter to the close. All change when He is present is advance. One after one we lose the mortal and the visible, but we gain the immortal and the invisible. The mountain-side we climb grows ever more and more alone—still more desolate of the things we once loved so dearly—but we are nearer at every step to heaven, and One waits us on the highest peak who will renew our strength. The landscape of our youth lies far below, and the shadows fall around it. We see but faintly now our childhood's home, the meadows where we played, the river we passed in boyhood, the path through the trees where we began to climb the mountain. These things seem centuries ago, dead in the dead past. It is a feeling not without its touch of bitterness; but let us but have heroism of heart to go

on alone, and trust in our brother Christ enough to lean upon his secret sympathy, and we shall hear his voice give answer to our heart: 'Be not afraid, it is I. Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world.'

Yes, middle age has come upon us, and we need a higher help than our own will to meet the change and chance of mortal life. They must come, and the solemn question is, shall we be able to conquer their evil, have we divine life enough in the spirit to make them into means of advance? For it is wise to remember that any change may be our overthrow.

It is time, then, to examine into our readiness for temptation. Our passions—are they under our command? There is in many persons a curious sense of unawakened capability of passion—and a fear of its being awakened in a wrong direction. They have lived a peaceful, self-restrained life for years, but sometimes—in a moment—what has been felt as a dim possibility becomes a reality. A torrent force of passion, in some hour of change, sweeps over life and for a time masters and enslaves the will.

Is our will in order?—have we habituated it in the power of Christ, and by a great love to his holiness, to conquer daily the motions of sin, the minor impulses of a passionate nature, the common temptations of a nature apparently cold? It is this habitual and prayerful preparation which is the only sure one, for we know not what one day of change may bring forth. We may lose in a week the fruit of the efforts of years. And it is terribly hard in middle life to get right again; it is a weary struggle then to redeem

the devastation of passion. For many years progress is at an end.

It is the same with other things. Our love of honesty of soul, of truth to our own convictions—we are ready enough to make our boast that the spirit of the world cannot touch these things. Possibly it cannot, as we are now. But if a sudden change take place—if fortune should smile in a moment upon us, or reputation come in an instant—our self-confidence is but poor protection. Suppose all we want in life, our highest aim, that position in which we think we can do most good and carry out the ideas of a lifetime, were offered us to-morrow, if we would but modify a few principles and forfeit a few convictions—are we prepared for that? Not so, unless we have realised and loved day by day, with prayer and humility, the truth above all things: and I know that the love we bear to truth is firmest when it is borne to One who died as its witness —to One who is the truth, and therefore can give the truth to men; to One who has promised as the Truth to be with us always, even to the end of the world.

It is not too much to say that in middle age, if the spirit of the world gets hold of a man and he is false to God and his own soul, he is fixed in degradation for many years; or the agony with which he is redeemed exhausts life, and he is to the end a broken man.

It is a wonderful drama this life of ours, and it is infinitely strange to separate ourselves at times from ourselves and look on as a spectator only at our own little kingdom. It has its beginnings, its rightful

kings, its hours of mob-rule, its battles for existence, its revolutions, its reorganisations, its usurpers, its triumphs, and we tremble for its safety as we gaze. Will it get out of all its trouble and change, into order and peace at last? At first we cannot tell. We rush back and unite our thought to ourselves again, and it seems that nothing can be done in the darkness and the anarchy of life. It is our hour of depression. The chamber of the soul is 'hung with pain and dreams,' and we ourselves feel like wafts of seaweed swept out to sea on the strong tide of fate into the midnight.

But stay;—are we so alone, so unhelped, so forgotten, so feeble, such victims of blind fate? Not so, if a triumphant humanity has lived for us—not so, if Christ has been in our nature bringing into it the order and perfection of Divinity, not so if these words have any value: 'Lo! I am with you always;' for then, we are in Him, and to be in Him is to be fated to progress passing into perfection, for we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Take up then your life this year, through catastrophe, through joy, through change, with the courage of children of God; with the resolution of kings who wear the crown, and assume the responsibilities of self-conquest; with faith in that immortality of ours in Christ, the awful inspiration of which dignifies, impels, and chastens life; with the ineffable comfort of the sympathy and strength of Him whose divine Manhood is with us and all our brothers always, even to the end of the world.

THE MID-DAY OF LIFE.

THE TRANSITION FROM YOUTH TO MANHOOD.

'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.'—Eccles. xii. 1.

THERE are some summer days which after a clear morning pass through a season of gloom. The sun hides itself behind a veil of cloud; depression falls on animals and plants. All things retire into themselves, as if defrauded by the morning brightness. The day itself seems to feel that it has not fulfilled the prophecy of its dawning, and lies heavily upon the earth. But it is only for a time. Just as the manhood of the day has come, it conquers its early sullenness—the clouds disperse, the sun breaks out, the birds resume their song, a new youthfulness runs through the trees.

It is the image of one who, having in later youth passed through much trouble, and lost during it the use, and joy, and naturalness of youth, recovers these in the midst of manhood.

There are other summer days when the freshness has been more or less constant, when the sun has never altogether hidden its light, when the morning breeze has gone on blowing even during the heat of

noon, when noon retains so much of moisture that the trees do not droop in the heat, nor the animals take to shelter. Afternoon and evening come, and this short stage of freshness passes away, but it has been there.

It is the image of one who has entered on manhood or womanhood, and yet has retained much of the fervour, restlessness, and breezy life of youth.

There are other summer days in which the progress is neither broken by any cloud, nor yet delighted by any continuance of freshness. When mid-day comes, it absorbs the morning and all its elements. It is dusty noontide, warm, full of work, making all things drink its good, passing naturally and steadily on to the afternoon and evening.

It is the image of those who have absorbed all the elements of their youth when they enter upon manhood or womanhood, and who settle down steadily to the work of life.

These, then, are three examples out of many of the way in which we pass from youth into the first half of middle age, and through the porch of the temple of manhood and womanhood, enter into the nave. It will be our work to-day to consider them, their temptations, and the lessons which belong to them.

1. There are certain characters which in youth lose part of their youth. Something has stepped in which has spoilt life. Sorrow or overwork has taken the edge from enjoyment by taking away physical health; a gloomy home has repressed enthusiasm; a wilful self-repression, born of religious asceticism, or of the demands of exacting friendship, has driven so deep the

springs of natural feeling that with all their innate force they cannot rise to refresh the surface of the heart. Sometimes these characters never recover: the process has gone too far, and they will never taste of youth again till they go home to God. Sometimes they turn to fanaticism and become the curse of the earth; but God, who knows the weakness of men, will be just to them—victims of fate—and remember that they are but dust. Sometimes this repression, especially when inflicted by religious parents, has its result in a reaction against the tyranny done in the name of God, and nature crushed in its natural, breaks out in unnatural channels. The man becomes a blasphemer and a profligate. The woman flies into the dissipation of the world, or meets a sadder though often a less sinful fate —the easy victim of one of those men who make the murder of womanhood their vile trade and viler pleasure.

But the case we speak of first is a happier one than these. It is of those characters who after repression, and when the time of youth is past, grow young again. Some blessed circumstance, some new affection, some happier climate of life pierces through the crust to the spring of youth beneath, and, like the waters of that artesian well which, coming from their snowy home among the mountains, were at last struck in the midst of the American desert and surging upwards turned the wilderness to a fruitful field, so now, in such characters, the waters of a hidden life of youth rush upwards, the more abundant from their long suppression.

It comes on man or woman with a shock of exquisite surprise. They feel as a plant might feel, which, never

expecting to bloom, opens suddenly in the midst of June its flower-cups to the soft wind, and the blue sky, and the visits of the birds and bees. Existence is transfigured. The soul is gifted with new powers, and the heart with a wealth of new feelings. They cannot help making experiments with all these new instruments. Every day is delightful, for every day there is something fresh to be tried, and the life of living seems inexhaustible. Naturally, there is a dissipation of powers, a want of concentration, a want of foresight, and these things coming in the midst of manhood or womanhood are dangerous to progress.

Again, in these cases, the curious thing is this—a thing which entangles the threads of life—that the rush of youth extinguishes the graver and sterner qualities which naturally belong to manhood and womanhood, and the man lives with the qualities of the youth, and by them, and the woman also. They grow older in years, but younger in nature, and the man does man's work with a boy's heart, and the woman, woman's work with a girl's feelings. A few quaint temptations beset such persons. They are sometimes seized with a sudden passion to throw by work altogether, like a schoolboy, and to run away, and it is almost a physical pain to resist this temptation. Very often all the work of the world seems as ridiculous to them as it does to a child, and to enjoy the only really right thing in life. They suffer, and not a little, from the want of fitness between their inner life and their outer work, and the suffering makes them impatient, and impatience spoils their work. Their heart is so open to new impressions that, almost

like a child, they take up one pursuit after another and finish none, the impression of the present being so strong that they cannot resist it. Of course all this produces a certain amount of unfitness for the world and for their daily labour, so that their fellow-workers think them unsafe, imprudent, and their leaders, if they belong to a party, set them aside as incapable of discipline. The best thing about them is not only their freshness—so that meeting them is like meeting a sparkling stream on a thirsty day—but also their natural individuality. They cannot get into the groove of things.

Now, what is it that they want?—for it is plain that the inevitable fault of such characters is the dissipation of thought, energy, and life. They want concentration of will towards a single and a noble aim; not such a concentration as will destroy their youthful feeling or injure their originality—for the very fact of that originality in the midst of a world enslaved to customs is more than other men's work—but a concentration which will leave their nature free, and yet make its freedom strong through the rule of law.

We seek this concentration in one aim after another. But there is always the chance of failure, and failure is followed by despondency, and despondency imprisons energy, and life is spoilt. Or the aim becomes stained with a mean or selfish motive, and we are then haunted with the sense of something radically wrong in us which strangles all endeavour, and so drift back into our aimless roving life again.

We want an aim which never can grow vile, an aim

which cannot disappoint our hope. There is but one on earth, and it is that of being like God. He who strives after union with the perfect Love must grow out of selfishness, and the nobility of the strife makes meanness impossible. And as to failure, failure is out of the question; our success is secured in the omnipotent Holiness of God.

Concentrate, then, your will on this. Do not wish, but will to be at one with God. 'Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find.'

The habit of concentration won in this spiritual realm, where prayer brings success, soon extends itself to the realm of intellectual and practical life. Your youthfulness of spirit is not destroyed, but a centre of strength is given to its feelings and its acts. Nor is the number of objects and of interests which you have, and which give charm and variety to life, limited by this spiritual concentration of the being towards God; on the contrary, you gain a power of harmonising them into order under the rule of a leading and noble idea. Your originality is not lessened, but increased, for it is revealed to us that a special work of God's Spirit is the development of the peculiar gifts of each man.

The second case I speak of is of characters which, passing into manhood and womanhood, retain for many years the elements of youth. This differs from the first, inasmuch as youth has not been repressed, but previously enjoyed. Hence the youthfulness of these persons is not so young as that of which we have been speaking, and it is mingled naturally with the graver and steadier thoughts of advancing years. As

the chief danger of the former is dissipation of character, the chief danger of the latter lies in over-fervency of character. One knows them by their sudden eagerness when interested, and by the ease with which they are interested; by the way in which their nature breaks into flower at the touch of sympathy; by the rapid intensifying of all their powers and feelings when they feel themselves liked and comprehended, so that they are much greater and better at one hour than at another; by the passion which they put into common things, and the way in which they exhaust on small work far more force than is needed. One knows them by their quickness, and by the half-shame which touches them when they have been over-quick in thought; by their delightful unconsciousness, and by their quick repression of feeling when they become suddenly self-conscious, their whole expanded leaves closing in a moment; by the intensity also of their self-consciousness when they have fallen into it. One knows them by their exaggerated contempt for form and their exaggerated love for the informal; by their love of theories, and their impatience and distress when either their theories are opposed by others, or they themselves are prevented by circumstances from realising them; by their harshness in speaking of those who are commonplace; by their impetuosity in reply, and the way in which contradiction astonishes them; by their frequent one-sidedness, for their convictions are so strong that they can seldom see the force of opposite convictions; by the want of form in what they do and say; by a certain inarticulateness; by a certain want of finish. One

knows them by sudden fits of weariness of existence and of sadness, during which life is seen as preternaturally dark, so that older persons smile; by the way in which sorrow when it comes surprises them, and joy when it comes gives no surprise; by the way in which they trade upon their health as if it were inexhaustible, and on feeling as if its enthusiasm could have no reaction.

All this is complicated by the graver thoughts and feelings of manhood and womanhood, which in this case we have conceived as existing side by side with youth and its fervour.

For the very presence of ~~this~~ young enthusiasm makes depression darker when it comes spiritually with doubt, or physically with exhaustion. As the brightest flowers look the dismallest upon dark days, so the brightest natures are the gloomiest when things go very wrong. In the hour of their depression the recovery of belief in God seems impossible, the toil of life unbearable. The awful shadow of the unknown lies heaviest on these; they feel the darkness more, and question it more bitterly. When they sin against their Father, their remorse is so keen that sin seems unforgivable. As kind as God seems when they are happy and excited, so severe does He seem when they are unhappy. Excessively in enthusiasm for work when all goes well, they are beyond just measure chilled when all goes ill. Necessarily they are victimised by fluctuations of feeling, and in these fluctuations the force of will is in abeyance. They become at last, if they do not take care, like seaweed tossed on the ocean, the

mere sport of circumstances, 'weak as is a breaking wave.'

Now what we want in this case is not the rooting out of youthful enthusiasm, but its direction.

Endeavour to make your enthusiasm self-restrained. The reason of all these depressions, and the weakness which follows on a succession of excitements and reactions, is, that we allow our fervour to run wild without a curb. It exhausts itself, and when trial comes or doubts attack us we have no force left to meet them. At once we drop into feebleness and melancholy.

Begin to win the power of will over enthusiasm in the sphere of your spiritual life. Power of will comes to man when he claims and makes by faith the Will of God as his own. Power of self-restraint is gained when a man so loves the perfection of Christ that he cannot allow himself to run into every excitement. He stops and asks himself, 'Would my Master have done this?—would He have smiled upon it?'

A few years of this reference of life to Him, and life is no longer a mere field of unrestrained abandonment to feeling; we begin to realise our difficulties, and what those words mean, 'Can ye drink of the cup which I drink of?' We feel that we shall want all the ardour we possess for the long contest against evil, for the race home to God. We learn to economise our force of enthusiasm, to keep it stored up against the day of the cross. We solemnly dedicate our life in prayer to our Divine Father, and ask of Him not to take away our fervour, but to double it, by giving us the righteous will which rules it nobly.

The result will be, not the loss of youthful ardour, but the addition to it, by the will, of strength and calm. Difficulty will not depress it, but heat it to a white heat; doubt will only stir it into regulated action; for its source no longer is in ourselves alone, but in the uncreated fire of the love of God.

Then, having ennobled and disciplined spiritual fervour, all other sources of enthusiasm will be ennobled with it. It will never permit them to be exhausted. Always directing them to perfect aims, they will, in pursuit of these, absorb instead of losing new force; for enthusiasm which feeds on noble objects redoubles its force as much as enthusiasm which feeds on ignoble objects exhausts its force.

Have, therefore, true and sublime ideals for your youthful fervour. These will preserve it to old age. Aspire ardently after truth, purity, many-sided charity, holiness of life; let everything else be put under these things. Be convinced of great truths, feel in the depths of your heart their beauty and their force. Be able to say, 'I know that God is my Father, and the Father of mankind; I know that the world and I have a Redeemer from evil; I know that mankind has been made Divine in Christ; I know that there is a Divine Spirit in me and in Mankind, who is educating us towards the perfect life. I know One who is the Resurrection and the Life to all mankind.' You cannot be convinced of mighty truths like these without being set on fire by them, and the fire will kindle every intellectual and imaginative enthusiasm which you possess into an abiding ardour of action so instinct

with that from which it flowed that it will propagate the sacred energy and set others on fire with the same. In this manner seek to correct and develope your youthfulness of nature in the midst of advancing years. By and by calm will come—not the calm of stagnation, but the calm which sits in the midst of intensity of feeling. That which disturbs and tosses our unregulated enthusiasm is vanity—desire of fame—the intruding element of personal interests. Our fervour of spirit becomes quiet, yet strong, when its highest impulse is beyond ourselves, when we can fix our most ardent wishes upon Christ, and find in Him the source of a sustained aspiration. For it is not only truths which inspire us, but truths embodied in One whom we can love. Pride, selfishness, want of charity, may creep in when we devote ourselves to noble ideas alone. But when we love them in a perfect Person who loves us, self and conceit are wholly lost, and in their loss calm is made co-ordinate with ardent feeling.

The third and last case we mentioned was that of characters who pass steadily from youth to manhood, leaving their youth behind them.

These settle down quietly to work. They have but little ardour of nature; they are not led astray by the vagaries of reappearing youth. They enter on their chosen business, and do it steadily from day to day—the man his work, the woman hers.

Their tendency, since they have no youthfulness to complicate their nature, is to become men and women of one dominant idea—to let their particular business or profession absorb all the energies of their nature into

itself, so that one portion of their character is especially developed and the other portions left untrained. Like Aaron's serpent, it swallows all the rest. They become, in this way, incomplete men. It is said, and with general truth, that for a great success in life this absorption is necessary. But it may be questioned whether a great success is not dearly purchased at the price of an imperfect manhood—whether success is the chief thing in life. Very successful persons are for the most part not men one would choose for companions in a voyage, or for friends in the greater voyage of life. They want variety, they want animation, they are too often the sated worshippers of their own success. And what they often are to us they are in reality in relation to themselves—not men, but the tenth or twentieth part of a man. But this is not only true of men who succeed, but also of those who are not successful, yet plod on—men and women only of one aspiration, of one business, like those who spend all their life in making the heads of pins.

It is wise to let something of success go, not to be anxious even about becoming either the first merchant or the first pointer of pins, in order that you may be able to train yourself into a more perfect man. Do not leave your imagination without its food, or starve your heart. He is but a poor creature, however famous in his own peculiar walk, who is the slave of figures, or of science, or of politics—machines for turning out machine work. Men ought not to be steam-engines, nor to work like them, though that seems to be a

prevalent notion. They are born to love and feel, to imagine and aspire.

Nor, above all, should we let the world and its work quench the demands of the spirit within us which desires union with the living God. If you allow the noise of your enthralling business to drown those inward cries, they grow fainter then and fainter, and the spirit falls into lethargy. The noblest portion of your being is left ignorant as an infant. Is that to be a complete man?

Feed that immortal thing with its true food, love to God, which is love to God's character in Christ; open its doors to the education of the Spirit of God, and be not troubled but rather nobly proud, if your spirit, trained by His power, prevent some of those many transactions in public life which make a fortune by running to the very edge of dishonesty, or hinder you from taking a place the comfort of which would have to be bought by the sacrifice of convictions. A fortune—a position—these are not the first things, in spite of the lying world which says they are. The spirit which can hold fast to truth, though it means the acceptance of ruin—the spirit which can refuse to be enriched at the expense of honour—the spirit which can do nothing which sins against its neighbour, is better than the life of Dives or the leadership of the fashionable world.

Educate all your being, for being devoid of the ardour of youth, and believing in steady work, you are in danger of becoming a one-sided man. Let your effort be to be manifold and many-sided, while you cling fast to your particular work. This is our Christian duty. For Christ

came to save the whole of our nature, to present us, at the end, body, soul, and spirit, perfect to his Father.

Lastly, our religious life settles down into a matter of habit as we pass into manhood and womanhood, and this, though coming first to those who have not retained youth, becomes at last the case of the others also. I speak, then, to all.

Our morality becomes fixed. Truth, purity, and the rest become habits, like the habit of walking. Beware lest they become Pharisaic, and pass from habits into mere forms. There is but one way of avoiding this, and that is by cherishing a great ideal which will not let us be satisfied. Christ gives us that ideal: 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.' And He Himself supplies the motive, for the great love which we nourish to Him will sweep us continually out of the region of formal morality into that realm where the life of self-sacrifice produces natural and noble action.

Our views of truth become fixed. Only beware of holding them as if they were the real essences of which they are only the forms. Be ready to change them if you find it necessary for the progress of your spiritual life that the essential truths you hold should wear new garments.

Our inner religious life becomes necessarily more fixed, more a matter of continuous and quiet exercise, and less a matter of sudden and enthusiastic feeling. We cannot help sometimes regretting this and fancying that because we do not feel so keenly, we are less near God, more near the world. We shall never feel so

deeply again, we think—never recall those hours when life seemed for a time to breathe the air of heaven itself. But in no case are we right to waste time on such regrets. Our business now is to go forward and to redeem the past. We may not get back the freshness of early inspiration; but we may attain something better—the resolute heart of noble faith, which, trusting in a Saviour of men, has the confidence to take up duty for his sake and for the sake of men his brothers, and, though failure and failure come, to win at last, through the doing of duty, those profounder, calmer, and more enduring feelings of nearness to God, which will bear the test of time and overcome at the end the shame and fear of death.

But, after all, were our religious feelings in youth deeper than those which we possess now? Unless we have been altogether going back, I cannot think so. They seem to us now, as we look back, to have been deeper; but they only seem so. In reality, it is because we feel more keenly and more strongly now, that we so canonise our youthful feelings. We impute to them, unconsciously, our present depth and strength of passion. We retain in memory the religious impressions of our early life, and we colour them with our own deeper hues, till they seem much more earnest and divine than they really were.

The fact is, youth cannot feel so deeply as manhood and womanhood, unless manhood and womanhood have been debased and hardened. Is not doubt of God's love a worse thing to us now than it was when we were young? Is not the cry of our hearts for

light more unutterable now than in the days when it came and went so quickly? Is not our hatred of sin, and our desire to escape from the dreadful circle of self into life with God and love of all in Christ, more intense, though far more silent, than it was of old? Is not our longing for certainty, for the assurance of the eternal life in union with our Father, more profound as we advance in years? Have not this world and its worldliness, though perhaps we live more in them, less power over us? It is not that we feel less, but that the movement of our feelings is larger, and their waters so deep that they are less easily disturbed.

But, after all, whether we feel much or little is not so much matter. The one thing needful for those who have passed into the stage of life which follows upon youth is to do the will of God, to consecrate their manhood and womanhood to the welfare of Man, to look forward to finishing the work given them to do, and at last, to the rest which remaineth for the people of God.

THE AFTERNOON OF LIFE.

THE RESTORATION OF THE INTERESTS AND POETRY OF YOUTH.

'Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.'—Psalm ciii. 5.

THE afternoon of life is marked by the concentration of our powers round one centre of work and thought. In youth, at our first entrance into manhood, we take up many interests, we make experiments upon our faculties and on many subjects, and so vivid is our force, and so large our heart, that we seem to have room for all.

One by one, most of these interests die away. We discover our inability to carry them further than a short way, or we cease to care to do so. As our character developes, many are seen to be out of harmony with it, or even to check its natural movement onwards; but they are useful in telling us what we cannot do and what we can. At last one or two take special power over us, and absorb the rest. If they grow naturally out of our character, if they are fitted to our powers as the sword is to the hand, our life flows smoothly to its end. If they are imposed on us by coercion of others, or of circumstances—and in such a light we are forced to regard the life of some in this crooked world—our life is injured and our course rugged and

painful to the close. But, whether our fate be one or the other, few of us have reached the later manhood without finding ourselves fixed in one pursuit. The traveller in the Alps walking in the early morning and seeing the white clouds change around a mountain-peak, cannot distinguish at a distance which is the summit and which the cloud. Now one form and now another attracts his eager gaze. But as the sun climbs the heaven, it lifts the wreathing vapour, and, drawing nearer, he sees at last, sharply defined against the pure sky, the one clear cone. So the voyager of life delights himself in cloud after cloud in the morning of his years; but when the afternoon has come, the one thing he has to do distinctly opens forth, and challenges his effort.

He finds the work of his life. At once all his powers concentrate themselves on this, and force, once scattered over a hundred interests, intensifies itself on one. It is then that life becomes strong, for life is at unity with itself.

And now, having found our work and settled down to climb the mountain steadily, there is a further question. What spirit is at the centre of our life? Whence do we draw the inspiration of effort? What is the motive power which influences and colours all our work? Does it depend on self or on Christ? It is a solemn question, for the answer defines whether the real labour of life will be eternal or not, useful to man or not, a source of growth or not to our own being.

And when I ask this question in this relation, I really mean whether a man's life has beyond its special aim a further aim of devotion to the cause of Man. I

mean here by the spirit of Christ the spirit which subordinates life to the cause of man, for that was the central spirit of Christ's existence. And something more I mean. I mean that he who sees the Race in Christ sees it at one with God in idea though not as yet in fact, and beholds himself as one of a great and united body who are here on earth to slowly grow up into union with God by faithful work—by long effort at last to realise that idea which God had of the full-grown Man, and which Christ now represents in God.

The man, then, who has Christ at the centre of his life—that is, the great ideas of which Christ is the personal realisation—cannot settle down into the dulness of manhood, content to lose altogether the things which made his youth so bright and happy. He desires to grow, and to grow by regaining these in a truer and more lasting form. He cannot abide in that spirit of selfishness which, by fixing our thoughts on personal success alone, forbids us to turn aside to seek in work for man higher thoughts to transfigure our life, or to refresh ourselves with the poetical aspects of man or nature. 'These things are unpractical,' says self; 'these things are necessary for your true manhood,' replies the spirit of Christ.

How may we recover in manhood, but in a wiser way, what was noble in our youth—recover our manifold interests, our poetic feeling towards the history of man and nature—our ideal of the goodness, truth, and love of man?

The first two will form the subject of this morning's sermon; the last the subject for next Sunday.

1. The restoration of manifold interests.

I have said that in settling into the groove of life we lose variety of interests. And the danger is lest, in clinging close to one alone, we develope only one part of our being. The student who pulls his philosophic bonnet over his ears that he may hear nothing but the whispers of the Ego; the scientific man to whom there is nothing in the world but his flint flakes or his gases; the theologian who buries himself in his speculations, forget that they themselves are greater than these things, and that man is infinitely greater. They hoard up a little knowledge, but they die with only one member of their nature developed, and that abnormally, and their usefulness to others has been almost a cipher. It is far worse when the object pursued is something which, pursued for itself alone, is base—money, rank, position in society, fame, things which have no worth unless they are used for men.

If the spirit of self is at the centre of your life, there is no doubt of your success in attaining these things, and the success you win increases the selfish spirit, till at last you gain the world and lose your true being. All the way up the mountain of life you see nothing but one object. No wayside beauty of the path attracts you; those whom you meet do not draw you to their side in friendship, sincere and deep; none of the bright interests which played around your early life and gave it variety and charm now touch your imagination. There is no denying that this life is dull. One has a monotonous interest in going on, enough to keep one alive; or one has a fierce gam-

bling interest, which eats at the heart of life like the worm which dieth not, and wearies even more than dulness. But there is no true life—no harmonious movement of all the parts of the character onwards and together—no dramatic clash of opposed and changing feeling—no colour nor light made by the play of many trained faculties upon one another. The spirit of self has been the chief impulse, and naturally life is joyless. All thought has knotted itself round yourself and your family, and there is no feeling, freshening and universal, such as is stirred in the heart when great human interests carry us out of self. True, you succeed. Self, self-devoted, is sure to win its object, and it forbids any dispersion of thought. But we have already said, touching on this subject, 'that it may be well questioned whether a great success is not dearly purchased at the price of an imperfect manhood, whether success is the chief thing in life.' The man of only one set of ideas is only the fraction of a man, however he may have perfected that set of ideas. And the worst of it is that he becomes the bigoted worshipper of his own speciality, and the theologian and the scientific man mutually despise each other for blindness to the separate range of truths on which each insists, not seeing that as long as they despise any human interests whatsoever they are uncultured men. The manifold interests of their youth ought to be recalled, but at the same time they ought to be combined with necessary unity of aim. Youth teaches us diversity; the first entrance into middle age, concentration; in later life we ought to combine both, to recover the interests of the one and to retain

the power of the other. I think one can do it best by the means of two great Christian ideas. One is, that, as God has called us to perfection, we are bound to ennoble our being from end to end, leaving no faculty untrained. The other is, that as Christ lived for man's cause, so should we. The first will force you to seek for manifold interests in order to make every branch of your nature grow; the second will lift you out of the monotonous and limited region of self into the infinite world of ideas.

So you will slowly get back the charm and variety of youth, only with an important difference. For formerly you had no fixed object, and life was dissipated in pursuit of a number of changing objects. Now you have found your work, and that gives security and anchorage to your character. You are fixed to a centre, but you radiate from it over a hundred fields of interests, and, living along each line, absorb from these fields a multitude of new ideas and feelings which vary while they strengthen your single aim. The new subjects which you take up and enjoy make you more complex in thought, more manifold in feeling, and, to your surprise, your real work does not suffer. For when your character widens you will obtain larger ideas of your special work, and do it more completely. The new knowledge and new thoughts are naturally brought to bear upon the main end, and its import expands, but not towards selfish aims. The high motive, that all life and all work is ultimately to be dedicated to the cause of man, carries you beyond any temporal or personal aims, while it includes them. The pursuit of

your life, whatever it may be, becomes idealised in the atmosphere of this motive and beautiful therein. An infinite tenderness and grace belongs to every work whose highest aim is the aim of Christ—the good of man. Life then becomes delightful, even of passionate interest, and the whole of being unfolds like a rose—full of colour, scent, and beauty.

This is the restoration of manifold interests to life, and the consequent development of character. It is one of our highest Christian duties to seek it and attain it.

2. Restoration of poetic feeling.

We pass our youth in a glorious world. One has often dwelt upon the joy with which the child receives the tide of impressions which, wave after wave, comes in upon him from nature and from man. But they are received without thought, and they come too rapidly for feeling: each washes away the previous one. It is different when childhood has passed and the intellect and the heart are now developed in youth. As we then learn something of the long history of our race, and Greece and Rome and England become more than mere names to us, our enkindled intellect makes a hundred theories with regard to national ideas, their growth and their decay. We generalise, and delight in our generalisations. It seems almost degrading to the imaginative world in which we live to bring our glorious generalisations to the commonplace test of facts. At last a dim suspicion begins to haunt us that our palaces have no foundation; a scepticism, which we hate at first, forces us to prove our ideas; and in a few weeks our unsub-

stantial vision dissolves, and we are left disenchanted. And now we resolve to be practical, and in a dry light to search for and to secure facts alone:

It is the same with our life with nature. In youth all the world seemed alive. River, rock, and flower seemed to speak to one another, and to give us back love for the love with which we met them. We were bound to the universe, and the universe to us. All things lived in and for each other, and in the thought of the mutual love of all we saw and heard, of all that nature gave to us, and we sent back in swift reciprocation—poetry and art were born within us, and we moved rejoicing in an atmosphere of beauty. A certain solemn awe amid the high solitudes of nature, an imaginative fear, as of a spirit in the air and sea, added to beauty a sense of sublimity. Then came the first touch of accurate knowledge to disperse our dream. Compelled to look at things one by one, we soon lost the poetic sense of them. It seemed absurd to think of the love of the stream to its meadows, of the bird to the flower. Life passed away from the universe, and we found ourselves face to face with a rigid force instead of a living spirit. Awe, and the terror which creates the sublime, vanished when we knew the reasons of things. A little study of electricity, and we soon lost the delightful awe with which we invested the thunderstorm. The colours and grace of the flower departed as we divided its stamens and counted its petals. We classified it, and it became a name, and not a living thing. We smiled when we thought of our poetic world; after all, it was very commonplace. We

set ourselves to work to grope amid isolated facts, and all the loveliness of the world decayed.

It is possible to settle down into this, to become the mere collector of historical facts, the mere investigator of the surface-life of nature, and for a time it is wise that we should go through this phase. But to remain in it to the end is unworthy of a man, an ignoble and a joyless life. We cannot be content with it. A passionate desire stirs within us to find our poetry again, to realise in the history of man an organic unity of thought, to clothe the skeleton of nature with a living form. But not as before. We have now possession of facts, and we must build up our new world of beauty upon their foundations. In the old dreamland we can never live again, but we may live in an ideal and yet a true world; we may restore the poetry of youth to our life in its relation both to Man and Nature.

As to the first, there is no idea which will so rapidly guide us into a larger and more imaginative view of the history of man than the great Christian thought which we owe to Christ, that all the race is contained in God; that all are bound together into unity in Him; that as all are children of one Father, so all are brothers existing in and for the good of one another.

It is impossible, then, to study any one age or any one nation as isolated from the rest. It is impossible, then, to think that anything is done by any nation which does not live in the whole race to influence it for ever. Invisible bonds bind the whole of the past to the present and the future. We look upon nations as living organisms, which grow, and whose

seeds when they die spring up in other forms in other nations. We rise to a still higher thought when we feel that the whole of Mankind is growing in the growth of its parts to a Divine end.

Again, we become aware of a living will beneath the surface-movement of history. We see this Will, which we call God, in the immense power which individual men who have genius, and who we feel are inspired by a Divine idea, have upon history ; we see it also in the great ideas which influence nations and the race. We see that facts tell us nothing till we can show their relation to these ideas—that if we would know our race and its nations we must have, not only the annals, but a philosophy of history. At last, out of all this new thought there slowly emerges the majestic conception of one great Mankind growing up, century by century, into a higher, more complex life, and passing onwards to fulfil itself in union with the idea of God of which it is in time the manifestation.

Thus, without losing our sense of the truth of facts, we get back our poetry. We live in a world grander and more beautiful than our youthful one, and every new fact we gain goes to swell the majesty of our conception.

Again, in our relation to nature, we can get back what we have lost. There are different paths to this recovery, but none lead us to it more directly and rapidly than the true conception of God. Once we have realised the thought of One Divine Will as the centre of the universe, we can no longer abide in the realm of unconnected facts. We feel they must be related to each other,

and so related as to find themselves in order under a few ideas, which we may call laws or what we please. Looking from our facts with this hope, we find at last, and directly through the help of the imagination, the great expressions of law which, tested by experiment, place us in a higher world of thought, no longer the mere collectors of facts, but the creators of an ordered universe. And now we hear no longer isolated notes, but the great symphony of nature—two or three themes infinitely varied, and the themes themselves so subtly connected in idea that all together they build up a palace of lovely and perfect harmony. This is the restoration in a truer form of the ideal majesty and the poetic feeling of our youth. And if we add to this another thought, which does not contradict the truth of science, but which is beyond its proof—that all things are filled with the life of God, and have their motions, organic and inorganic, in Him, being in fact forms of His thought and manifestations of His life—we get back still more completely our early poetry, without the untruthfulness which then ensured its death. The world, long dead to us, begins to live again. We begin to feel our union with it within the thought and life of God. We are fitted to it, and it to us; we receive beauty from it through a thousand sensible impressions; we clothe it in new beauty by the work of our intellect and feeling upon it. The same living Spirit moves in us and in it, and binds us to it, till we feel towards mountain, cloud, and stream, and every lovely spot upon its surface, a feeling which partakes of personal friendship and affection. More-

over, though the form of the thought is changed, we get back, through the higher science, our old imagination that the things of nature love each other and live for each other. There is a true intercourse between air and flowers. Flowers do really breathe. The air gives its carbonic acid to the plant, the plant gives back oxygen to the air. The sun is as truly the great giver of life and force and joy in the world of nature as in that of the imagination. And these are but a few instances, out of a multitude, of the infinite association of all things. We are not really wrong when we say that all things live by giving and receiving of each other's good.

This is the restoration of poetic feeling to our manhood. It is a noble thing to reach; it dignifies life to the very close. It dignified the life of him* who has lately, full of years and honour, passed away from us, who was laid last week in the silent Abbey beside one greater than he, but not more pure of heart, more faithful to God and to his work, more full of high enthusiasm for knowledge, and of delight therein. He kept to the end that eternal childhood which is the special grace, and perhaps the special power, of genius. Through accurate science he had reached the true poetical life with nature, and his old age had greater pleasure in the beauty of the world than his boyhood. Building up by philosophic thought the palace of the universe, he filled it with the love and feeling which all the loveliness of the universe stirred within his heart.

* Sir John Herschel.

Disdaining nothing, finding in all things interest and delight, he gave as much thought and rapture to the fungi of the wayside hedge as he gave of old to the southern stars in those four years of lonely work nigh to the Cape of Storms. Nor did he miss the higher and more poetic thought which made the universe, whose laws he knew, not the slave of law, but alive with the spirit and wisdom of God. He rejoiced to see, not force alone, but a Divine will moving in all things; and so it came to pass that his 'common thoughts were piety, and his life gratitude.' He wore his learning 'lightly as a flower,' and wore it as the gift of God. And as I refer in thought to the beginning of this sermon, I see that it was given to him to illustrate that life of manifold interests which leaves no power undeveloped. He was not enslaved to one branch of science, nor to science alone. We know over how many fields of natural philosophy he went his way, but it is with special pleasure that we think of the wise old man recalling in age the interests of youth, and finding in his translation of Homer the charm of the earlier Greek world encompassing him with the old poetic life. It is with equal interest that in the scholar we find the patriot, and hear that it was his voice which in his village stirred the youths to take up with eagerness the volunteer movement of England.

He died, having finished his work faithfully, and with youthful ardour, to the end—a man who had developed all the powers which God had given him, and who rendered them up with humility and faith to God again: not indeed to die here in our memory, or

there, where he has gone, to cease his labour or to lose his delight. For, for such as he, in that ampler world there is larger work, in that lovelier world there is higher pleasure.

Yes, brethren, for those who choose growth and not stagnation, for those who win back, in reverence for their own nature and for the idea of God within them, the dreams of youth in a truer and nobler manner, and add their realisation to the steady work of manhood—for those who believe that God wishes them to be perfect, and strive to grow into that perfection—for those who do not cease to aspire, while they work within their limits, growth does not cease, it goes on for ever. For them the promise of my text is true—their youth is renewed like the eagle's.

THE AFTERNOON OF LIFE.

THE RESTORATION OF OUR IDEAL OF MAN.

'Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.'—Psalm viii. 4, 5.

THE twofold view taken of man in these verses is remarkable. The Psalmist begins by depreciation. Is man worthy of the care of God? Can this creature, whose time passeth away like a shadow, in himself a thing of nought, engage the thought and tenderness of God? And in truth, this is often our bitterest feeling. It seems, at times, when the hopes which were once so bright have faded from our skies, that God takes no pride in us, that we and all our long, weary effort are nothing to His heart.

But neither we nor the Psalmist can continue to maintain that view. We feel that it is one-sided. We learn that God does care for us, that He has some pride in the creatures He has sent forth from Himself. We pass from the lowly to the exalted view, and in combining both we find the whole truth. What is man? Nothing, it is true, but also, a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour, having domi-

nion over all the earth. The lowlier view belongs often to our manhood, the ideal view to our youth, the combination of both ought to belong to our later years.

In the progress from childhood to later manhood, a portion of which subject we treated last Sunday, our view of man changes as much as our view of nature. We begin with a lofty but dreamy ideal of the goodness and glory of Man, and the dream often lasts through our youth. We pass at the beginning of middle age into a period when our dream is shattered by disappointment. We are cheated, we come into contact with false friendship, we discover the vast extent of evil in mankind, and we are in danger of settling down into scorn, or indifference to men. It would be a miserable groove of thought in which to run down into the grave. But God has provided some better thing for us. Slowly our early ideal is restored in another way. We gain a wiser, truer, more charitable view of our race. We take into it the lessons learnt during the time of our disappointment, and yet we find man crowned with glory and honour. The crown is mingled with dark weeds, and thorns are among its gold and jewels, but after all it is a crown.

This, then, is our subject to-day—the restoration, in the later years of middle-age, of the ideal of mankind.

But, first, we must trace the growth of our ideal through childhood and youth. It takes its earliest form through home. Our mother's care and love; our father's watchfulness; the less deep, but natural kindness of servants; the joy of holidays, when everyone seems to live

to amuse us; the pleasant association with our brothers, sisters, and childish friends, sufficiently varied by quarrels, like April showers, to be interesting, create in us an ideal of mankind. All are loving, true, and faithful to us, sheltered as we are from wrong in the enclosed garden of home.

As we pass into boyhood, still innocent, the transient sorrows and betrayals which we suffer do not touch us with great pain. Our feelings are not deep enough to risk much on one person, nor to lose much if we are disappointed. Our sense of moral right is not keen enough to suffer much from untruthfulness, nor to know how evil, evil is. We still believe in men.

Again, nature helps us to idealise man. We see man through the nature we love, and add to our half-formed conception of him the sublimity, beauty, or peace of the scenes in which we find him. Those who have been young in the midst of the orchards and cool gardens of mid-England, will remember how they transferred the sweetness and calm of nature to the life of the labourer without seeing its evil and its misery. Those who have lived among sterner scenes, where man, as in the shepherd-life among the mountains, has to contend with awful forces, where every rocky gorge and torrent has its tale of human suffering or human daring, will recall how their imagination worked till man became in thought sublime—a living creature moving as a master among the powers of nature till he was seen as one of them. This was the experience of Wordsworth's boyhood. Man was 'ennobled outwardly before his sight.'

It is thus that our ideal grows, from the direct influence of home, and from the transference of the beauty, passion, and power of nature to those who live among nature.

We dream of a perfect humanity.

And it is a thing to bless God for to begin life in this way, to start with belief in the nobleness of our race:

> Were it otherwise,
> And we found evil fast as we find good
> In our first years, or think that it is found,
> How could the innocent heart bear up and live?

Happy is the man who has had in childhood true hearts and loving hands about him in his home; happy he, whose inexperienced thoughts have first communed with man through the fair and sublime things of nature. For *his* face is turned towards the truth, his prepossessions are of that kind

> Without which the soul
> Receives no knowledge that can bring forth good.

No sight of evil afterwards, of misery, of meanness, can ever blot wholly out of his mind hope for the race and belief in goodness. He can say, when the first bitterness of disappointment is over, 'Well, all this is evil, but there must be a seed of good; all this is vile, but there is worthiness if I could find it—for I have known a loving home, I have felt true reverence for man.'

Nor, indeed, though much of its simplicity is lost, is our ideal of man lost as long as youth lasts. We are then too full of life to look at death, too full of hope to believe in the victory of wrong, too ready for new friends and new interests to care much for the loss of a

few: we have so much faith in men that we can afford to part with some, and not recognise that we are the poorer.

Moreover, books open to us their wondrous world. We find our heroes, heroes of war and religion, of daring adventure and self-sacrifice. The poets and artists seize on us, and man grows beautiful in their pages and their work. Vast thoughts of a march of nations, of the terrible games they play, of their mighty rise and fall, of the causes and the ideas millions have struggled for and of the passions involved, swell into sublimity our idea of man, till at last nature becomes second and man first, the central thing of the universe, dust, yet akin to godhead, shortlived as the flitting of the shuttle through the loom, but crowned with glory and honour, and all things in subjection under his feet.

No one can say that this ideal lasts. It does not bear contact with the world. It is a dream, and we wake to lose it. But in our loss of it, we fall into the other extreme. We have as mean an opinion of man as we had a lofty one, and our question is, is that mean opinion the right one; is it fit that we should possess it to the close? Or can we get back our ideal in a truer and a soberer fashion, and die with faith and hope for man, with love for him ruling our thoughts and action? That question we may answer by tracing some of the ways in which we lose our youthful ideal and find it again, a different, but a securer thing.

Youth is scarcely over before a certain weariness of our enthusiasm creeps over us. We have worked it so hard that its sources are exhausted for a time. The

light and colour fade away from many things, and we turn upon them with a kind of anger because they give us no more the pleasure we once received. Then we begin to play with a kind of cynicism; we say, emotion is dead and youth is past, and that all things are indifferent. But there is little reality in our talk, for we are as full of emotion and of life as before. It is simply that we are tired of the part of enthusiasm, and we want to play another part and make our life a little more dramatic. We are not yet disenchanted, but still this sort of thing prepares us for disenchantment. We are ready now, in this half-contempt of enthusiasm, when we get any proof of the badness of men, to think badly of Man.

Moreover, we have really lost the grand abstract thought of man which we won from knowledge of books and art. The little vices and follies of the university or society, their 'bustling passions,' the small and idle characters we meet, the petty interests of the common world in which we move before we enter on the work of manhood, all tend to break up the general thought of mankind into its petty particulars. The grand conception of the whole race, and of nations, as impersonated in thought, fades away, and we find ourselves forced to look upon a series of small persons. We drop from our ideal heights.

Then comes the entrance into real life, into the work of manhood or womanhood, abroad or at home, and our disillusion begins. We find life harder than we thought, and men and women very different from our ideal. We are in the midst of those who repudiate enthusiasm as unpractical, to whom self-interest is the first law, and

whose rule is to suspect rather than to trust. Everything goes to overthrow our dream of a high Humanity. Our aspirations and hopes are ridiculed, and we join, after a time, in the ridicule. We are cheated and overreached in business, or made a tool of in society, and it is well if we do not join by and by in the same sort of work, and deal to others the measure we have received. We thought men would help us when we desired to help them, give way to us when we had right on our side, be honourable with us as we with them, and we find many as hard and cold as granite, and who will neither help, nor give way to right, nor be just, if it goes against their personal interest. And we whisper to ourselves, 'We will go with the stream; why should not self-interest be our law also? All are equally bad, why should we adopt a higher standard of justice, love, and honour than the rest? Should we do so in this whirling tide, where every atom pushes the other out of its way, we shall never succeed.' And then the work is done, and the noble image youth presented of mankind changes into an ugly idol.

A still bitterer blow awaits us often. We have had a friend, man or woman. He represented to us mankind, he embodied for us all our youthful dreams of faithfulness, honour, and devotion. With him all the world was fair, things done with him had twofold worth. Our trust in him was full and clear, and we should have taken his cause as ours against the world. When, all in the turn of an hour, we find him false as hell, mean, one who has used our love for his own ends, who never gave back one feeling to us that was not

feigned, who laughed in his sleeve at our trust, and had not merit enough to be ashamed of his baseness.

With that, the house of life falls in the most hateful ruin round us. We are soured at the heart. 'All are as mean and false as he,' we cry in our first passion. We hate and scorn ourselves for our blindness, and this gives to our bitterness a keener sting. We doubt our other friends, we even doubt ourselves; truth and goodness seem to us but cunning forms of ill, and as we think of our youth, and its ideal of man, our laugh is half of scorn and half of shame.

Are we to settle down into these things? Is this contempt of men, and the selfishness and isolation it engenders, the atmosphere which we shall breathe through manhood to old age? God forbid!—there is no outward misery which would not be blessedness in comparison with that. Nor does the Father of love leave us in this bitter land. In some hour when the heart is softened, we become aware of the lesson of the cross of Christ. Some simple event, in which we have to act for others, calls us out of our selfishness, and we are as it were surprised into self-devotion. In a moment of impulse, we forget ourselves for a child, a woman, or an acquaintance. At first we smile at the return of enthusiasm, and half despise ourselves for our unpractical effort. But the sweetness of the thing makes its way. We have felt the attractive power of the cross. He who was lifted up for men draws us to his life by making us partakers of the joy of sacrifice. We feel not, as in youth, a pleasure for which we can give no reason, but pleasure which seems founded on a

law, for the more we give up for others, the deeper and the purer is, we find, our pleasure.

And in the light of this revelation, we whisper to our heart, 'The maxim of the world is wrong, self-interest is not the first thing. I have found men bad because my rule of life was evil. I will live for others now. I will try what love, and trust, and the ignoring of wrong to myself will do towards restoring my ancient joy.'

It is wonderful how men change to a changed heart. We ourselves being ennobled, see noble things, and loving, find out love. Little touches of goodness, of courage, of love in men, which, formerly, looking for perfection, we passed by, now attract us like flowers beside a dusty highway. We take them as keys to the character, and door after door flies open to us. The man reveals the treasures of his heart. We find aspiration, penitence, tenderness, in those we thought grovelling, hard, and selfish. We trust men, we throw ourselves upon the good in them, and they become better now that they are not suspected of being evil.

Driven by our new principle to search for good and not evil, and to find it in all, we take notice of ordinary men whom we have passed over, and it is with an exquisite surprise that we become conscious of the vast amount of daily sacrifice done by common men and women, by those whom we call dull, by those who have to fight a hard battle like the poor; of the high service performed to God in many a simple heart, that, like a mountain chapel on the wayside, can shelter only humble worshippers. Delighted we pursue our quest. Each day unveils something good, and at last our ideal

is restored again, sunlight breaks again upon the landscape of humanity. Only we see the real thing now, and not the dream. We see evil with the good, we see struggle, frequent failure as well as victory, but we have a manly sympathy with the struggle, and a belief that failure will be repaired through God, in whom, through our knowledge of the goodness of man, we are now, at last, beginning to believe. We do not expect too much or demand too much, for we know now what human weakness means; we make allowances, we have patience to wait, we suffer long and are kind, and by and by we are rewarded by finding that we have led a soul out of selfishness into charity, out of weakness into power. And so a softer, sweeter, humbler life becomes ours; an infinite and tender hope for man swells in our heart; and slowly there grows up a new ideal, a new picture of Mankind, truer than our youthful one, further off, but built on deep foundations hidden in the guiding tenderness of a Father of men whom we have learned, through the spirit of the Saviour in our hearts, to trust with His own children.

Then, also, the bitterness of that first betrayal of friendship passes away. We feel it shameful to make the lie of one prove the lie of all; we feel it an insolence done to mankind to condemn all men because one has put gall into our heart. Even the hatred which we felt at first for the deceiver passes at last into a kind of distant pity for one who was so empty-hearted as to betray. We hate the treachery, we cannot quite hate the traitor. We never admit him to touch our hand again, but we forgive him and pass on.

For we should feel it disgraceful to be so overcome by our disappointment as to drop for ever the bright conception of our youth or to wholly disbelieve in friendship because one friendship has been foolish. It is the traitor who is degraded, not we. At the hour of his worst trial, all forsook and fled the Saviour. But He met them after his death as if nothing had happened. One, indeed, went to his own place. For so deep a treachery there was no forgiveness in this world. But Christ recognised the weakness of the rest, and forgave. He did not distrust all human goodness, or even theirs, because they had once wretchedly failed.

Looking on that, we recover our ideal of human nature, our heart opens to new friendships, and we find, taught by our experience, friends who at least are true. We prove them, and though we discover dross amid the gold, somehow the dross enhances the value of the gold. And as the friendship grows it loses its littleness, and becomes at last, chastened by many mutual trials, something on which we can rely for life and death. Our old ideal is restored, and we can trust it now.

Once more, that youthful ideal, won from history and art, of the grandeur of the whole race and its career, is rudely overthrown when life brings us as men into contact with the evils of great cities, with the sins of nations and governments, with, perhaps, things horrible in the history of our own time. The first shock, when our early conception of womanhood is overthrown in a great city, is followed by a hundred others. We become aware of whole masses of society living in

habitual crime, and apparently condemned to it by an iron fate. Still more miserable when, having loved national freedom and just government, we see them violated for many years, men degraded and accepting their degradation, the gulf between classes deepened, and such seeds of hatred sown, that at last, in an hour of demoralisation, that which has torn all our hearts for the last week takes place—madness, despair, and anarchy on one side, fierce and hateful vengeance on the other—the queen of European cities consumed by her own children and her streets choked with the dead, brothers slain by brothers, till we turn away sick with pity for miserable man, sick with pain for that which will be brought in charge hereafter against the sacred name of liberty. Our ideal of humanity is stained with evil or made dark with blood.

And is it in this that we are to die? is this the dreadful faith by which we are to live? When old age has made the pulse beat less warmly, are we to look back upon the glorious thought of our youth, and weep for its ruin, bitterly? Not so! the wisdom and patience of Christ restore a more sober view, give back the light, and reawake the hope. The soul inevitably reacts from so profound a gloom, but a sense of awful mystery and power remains, born out of the very horror and sin, and broods in our imagination over the race of man. And the mystery and power give us a strange suspicion that that which could sin so deeply must be capable of high goodness and greatness. It cannot be, we think, that there is not another side to the affairs of men. Then, knowing the evil, we recall the good.

There have been times when men and nations have toiled and died gloriously for great causes and great ideas; when, in some high national sacrifice, a people have shaken off their evil and proved that man has glory and honour for his crown, when freedom and truth have triumphed. There are things which show still that God has not forgotten men, that He still reveals Himself in them as truth and justice, still cares and works for them; times when, as last year, a long tyranny went down with a crash, and the hearts of all men leaped for joy. And, thinking of these things, there suddenly start up before us, alit with our new-born hope, the great Christian ideas which Christ revealed in life and died for on the cross, and the spirit of which was poured out like fire on men on the day of Pentecost—the idea of the fatherhood of God, and therefore of the childhood of all the race—the idea of the brotherhood of mankind, to be fulfilled at last—the idea of a Mankind made divine in Christ, and therefore in fact destined hereafter to reach, collectively and man by man, through ages of progressive education, the divine perfection now secured for it in God. And grasping with our greatest faith these things as truth, our vague hopes are strengthened, and in spite of selfishness a crime, of the horror and pity of the tragedy, we dare to renew our ideal in a wiser way. We know now the awful facts of human life, and yet do not despair. We take with us the troubled human heart of the prophet, and yet we prophesy the resurrection of nations from guilt, and of mankind from evil. Below the storms which toss its wild waves to heaven in anarchy of waters

we look into the central heart of the ocean of humanity, and see its slow current moving on to good. A vaster, nobler idea of man rises before us: not the sinless, peaceful ideal of our youth, but the idea of the Titan, Mankind, possessed by indestructible good, struggling onwards from age to age against his defectiveness and his evil towards perfection, worn with a myriad sorrows, stained by a thousand wars, his mighty brow furrowed with the thoughts and passions of centuries, his heart beating with love which renews its youth eternally, with dark hatreds too, which mark his weary steps with blood; and yet never relaxing his onward march, never wholly unconscious of the good within him, never wholly false to his immortal destiny, never forsaken of God, but accomplishing from generation to generation, in a thousand different forms, but through the union of all in one work of progress and development, that single aim of perfection which God had in His mind for the Race when He created Man in His own image and endowed him with the passion for perfection. It is thus that we get back our ideal, different indeed, not so much beautiful as sublime, not filling our hearts with idle joy, but penetrating them with a glorious expectation.

And now, we move, as in the presence of majestic sorrow and effort, among our brothers with bated breath and loving footstep. The awe of the vast struggle, the infinite variety of the great drama, add dignity and solemnity to our life. A faith which exalts the heart and leads to devotion to the human cause enters into our heart, when we feel that all Mankind from century to

century is working out in form the idea of God, and must complete it. Patience makes the soul calm, for the vastness of the conception we now possess of man reconciles us to the slowness of his progress; and out of the thought of it all, and of dwelling on it all—on all the suffering, toil, mystery, and victory, and the immortal renewing of them century after century—a fountain of love and tenderness rises in the heart to soften, sweeten, and fertilise life; and within, an infinite hope for man, half rapturous as we look forward, but now in our sobered hearts balanced by the 'pathetic truth' of life, makes divine our decaying years, and blesses death with the faith of Simeon, 'Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.'

THE AFTERNOON OF LIFE.

THE RESTORATION OF BELIEF.

'I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul.'
Isaiah xxxviii. 15.

We have spoken for two Sundays past of that second half of man's middle age, when he settles down for life into his groove; when, beginning to descend the hill towards the graveyard in the valley, he will not change much more, except through the changes which decay brings. We asked the solemn question of ourselves, into what we had settled—into hardness or tenderness of heart, into width or narrowness of view, into suspicion of men or that wisdom of charity which beareth, believeth, and hopeth all things of men. We saw that we had found, after many oscillations, the work of our life, that central point to which our will directed all our faculties. We asked ourselves what spirit dwelt in that central point—the spirit of self, or the spirit of Christ; the spirit whose wages is death, or the spirit whose gift is the eternal life of love.

We found that the peculiar dangers of this settling down which marks the second period of middle-age were the destruction of youthful ideals, on the ground that we had found them to be unpractical, and the

destruction of our youthful belief in the goodness of men, on the ground that we had been disappointed, deserted, and cheated; so that we fell in the first case into an unpoetical materialism, and in the second into indifference to human interests, and hardness of heart. It became a question then how we might escape from this hardness of heart and recover, but in a wiser way, all that was noble in our youth. We traced the restoration of our poetic feeling towards nature. We traced the recovery of our ideal of humanity, but we left the third untouched—the restoration of belief. This will form our subject to-day.

In the especial case of Hezekiah, belief was restored by a great shock which brought him into contact with reality. He had been living, as many of us live, a pleasant, prosperous life, till he had really grown to believe that this world and its interests were the only things worth caring for. The shadows and mockeries in which he moved grew more and more substantial in the way we know so well. His treasures, his art collections, the beauty of his palace, made him love his life and dream that it was not a dream—when suddenly he was brought into contact with the actual things which lie beneath the apparent. God appeared to him, not as to Adam in the cool of the day, but as He came to Job, in the whirlwind and the eclipse, and Hezekiah knew that he had been living in a vain show. The answer of his soul was quick and sad: 'By these things men live, O Lord;' these are the blows which teach men what life really is. But careless prosperity had

done its demoralising work on him. There is a certain unmanly softness in his utterance which speaks of one whose will had been enervated by a dilettante life, who never, as long as he lived, would have again firmness in thought, or decision in action.

Many of you are prosperous, happy, and at ease in this great city. It will be wise for you to remember that thoughtless prosperity weakens the fibre of the soul. When one is accustomed to gratify on the spur of the moment every wish, to buy everything that strikes one's fancy, to live only from day to day, and not from idea to idea, then the directive power of the will and the restraining power of the conscience, and even the distinguishing power of the intellect, are all weakened, and when that inevitable shock comes, whatever it may be—for you cannot escape the common fate—you meet it as an untrained man meets a sudden call upon his muscular strength—in a soft, exhausted manner. It is true you are redeemed from carelessness, you become a servant of God, a believer in the eternal, but you never become the veteran of the cross; there is always a tinge of unmanliness in your Christianity. You go softly, there is in your soul that bitterness which marks the weak man.

The blow which sobered Hezekiah was a common one. It did nothing more than bring him face to face with death. The process whereby his dependence on God was restored was uncomplicated. But there are far worse shocks than this, and recovery from them into a godlike life is long and dreadful. There are things which at first seem to annihilate belief and

change an indifferent or a happy nature into earnest, even savage, bitterness.

One of these is the advent of irrecoverable disease—protracted weakness, or protracted pain. Suddenly the victim is stayed in the midst of life and isolated in his chamber; or he looks forward and knows that there is nothing but pain between him and death. God forgives our human anger then, but we speak roughly to Him at first. We challenge Him for unfair treatment, we ask what we have done, we demand if this is the boasted love of a Father: we curse our day. It is a dark anger, and may grow in intensity till faith and love are lost for this life—but it will not reach that point if we have some greatness of soul, if we are open to the touch of human love. For, though we are angry with God, we are not angry with our home and with our friends. Our misfortune brings round us all the ministering of common human tenderness; we meet with exquisite sympathies, with love which renews its flower each day, with infinite delicacy of thought from men. Our sympathy is kindled in return, the bitter fount of tears grows sweet, we can only repay the love we receive by the self-restraint which hinders complaint and keeps us from giving trouble. And then slowly the soul becomes alive to love; a delicate sensitiveness to human affection takes possession of the heart; unselfishness is the element it breathes; a noble patience becomes the habit of the spirit: and through the benign influence of human love the first step towards the restoration of belief has been made, the soil is prepared for the work of the Spirit of God.

And then, one day, the gospel story in all its sweet simplicity attracts and softens the sufferer's heart. He reads of Christ. He also, the only begotten Son, suffered, and yet the heavenly Father loved Him well. 'Perhaps I too,' he says, 'may be God's son, my suffering too in some strange manner may be a portion of His love to me and to my fellow-men.' The thought transfigures pain—an ineffable, inexplicable rush of tenderness takes place. We know not why we should love God. We only know we do. In that hour a bond is made which eternity cannot dissolve; the child finds a Father, and the soul is saved.

And, afterwards, one other thought, the parent of many consolations, adds its beauty to his inner life. He reads that Christ's suffering in self-sacrifice brought redemption unto man. Surely, he seems to dream, that is no isolated fact. It represents what all self-sacrifice is doing. 'And I, if I bear with love and patience, may also, through my pain, be saving men, may fill up that which is behindhand of the sufferings of Christ, may carry on that enduring sacrifice by which the race is saved. On the wings of that idea, my solitary life is raised into a region of joy and triumph. I too, in my apparent uselessness, am at one with the Great Labourer. I am not alone. I have ties which unite me to my brethren; my suffering links me to the whole race; I bear with Christ my cross for men.'

This is not only the restoration of belief—it is the victory of life.

But there are more dreadful shocks than that of long

disease. There is that shipwreck which comes of dishonoured love. Many things are terrible, but none is worse than this. To have had the whole of being dissolved in one cup, filled, it once seemed to us, with waters pure as the heaven, whose very touch made life divine; and then to find that they were poison, which infected and then consumed—this is the bitterness of death held in the intensity of life; and this, in a world which looks so fair, is the fate of many who perish of pain and make no sign.

There is nothing so full of ghastly irony on earth as the way in which the fate of a man or woman's life is often cast on a single die, risked in a single moment; and when the root of love from whence grows all the beauty and fruit of the tree of life is bitten through and through, what remains?

> When all desire at last, and all regret,
> Go hand in hand to death, and all is vain;—
> What shall assuage the unforgotten pain,
> And teach the unforgetful to forget?

For some there is no remedy but death and far beyond, the immanent tenderness of God; and these die in the burning sand—poor children, cast like tender-coloured shells, too fair and delicate for so rough a treatment, high up upon the beach by the rude storm. For others, they live on in a devouring memory; all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten that little spot of life for many years. And the memory poisons all belief in God. It is the wickedest thing in the world to corrupt and dishonour human love, for those who do it destroy the faith of those they injure in the love of God

and the kindness of men. In this world the restoration of their belief seems often beyond the great Healer's power. The wound has been too wide and deep.

But there are many who recover, whom God leads out of the desert into the still garden of an evening life of peace and usefulness, and even joy. Can we at all trace how this may be?

Lapse of time does part of the work. If they are strong of nature—strong to endure as strong to suffer—if they have enough faith, not to believe in love, for that may be too much to ask as yet, but only enough not to deny love; if they can wait, even with their faces down in the sour grass of life—the soothing hand of time touches the bitterness and it slowly dies away. But it does not touch the memory of love. In the quietude of middle-life we look back upon our early misery and only remember the love we felt. The cruelty, the pain, the fear have become, not overmastering presences, but phantoms which are drifting away. Our love was wasted, was dishonoured as a gift, but in itself it was beautiful, pure, and true, and it remains what it was. 'It was sweet to have given all away, it was passionate pain to have the gift thrown aside and trodden down; but that pain has passed, and now only the sweetness of having given remains with me.'

That exquisite experience, one not rarely felt, so divine is this nature of ours, is the point on which the heavenly Father seizes—'Yes! my child,' He says, 'it is no dishonour to have given and not to have received; it is the very essence of my honour, the long experience of my life with men. Your bitter trial has been uncon-

sciously the image of my longsuffering.' It touches the soul home, to feel that when we thought ourselves furthest from God, we were unconsciously nearest to Him; that when our human love was set at nought, we were closest to Him who loves against rejection and neglect. And when God speaks to us in this way, He speaks that which Christ acted among men. He, too, gave all and received nothing. Pouring infinite love on men, they despised and rejected Him. But nothing could change his tenderness into hardness, nor turn his charity into gall. When all his sacrifice had been dishonoured, He bent his head and prayed, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

And you are saved, faith is restored, hope is renewed, the root of love reknits its fibres, the tree of life puts on again its robe of foliage, recovers all its fruits, and souls are redeemed by the results of your bitter experience, when, like Christ, you can turn and say, Father, forgive him, Father, forgive her, for they knew not what they did.

Once more, there have been and are many of us, who are conscious that as we have passed into the later period of life and mingled with the world, our early faith has also passed away. To all thoughtful men this is no slight shock.

Our young religion (and I speak of no uncommon thing) was not only unquestioning but often enthusiastic. It depended much on those whom we loved. For the young believe through their affections, and their faith is coloured by their heart. Not unfrequently, especially

within the last five-and-twenty years, when so many religious movements had leaders born to attract youth, the religion of men has been one of exalted devotion or of poetic sentiment. But, depending much on the personal influence of special men, and not on personal union with God, depending more on human direction than on individual consciousness of a Father won through unshared and original effort, it became subject, when inevitable circumstance did away with the direct influence of which I speak, to reaction. The youth left the university, the girl left her home, and met with a multitude of varying currents of opinion. New views, embodying larger aims, bringing their hearers more into contact with the race but bound up with antichristian developments of thought, loosened the ties of old religious associations and led us unconsciously to despise the piety of the past as illiberal, sentimental, or ignorant. Our religious feelings, which had been without us and not within, slowly and necessarily died away. The war of criticism and of science, the endless debates, the eagerness of intellectual discussion which rage around subjects once venerated and dear, insensibly diminished their spiritual power on us, for feeling grows cold in an atmosphere of dialectics. The tone of our society, the very literary or professional work in which we were involved, the friends whom we had made, the drift of the current of our life, all combined to overthrow the building of our early faith. We became more and more liberal, but we also became more and more unbelieving. Finally, the day arrived when the last tie which bound us to the religion

of our youth was severed by some touch of the knife of circumstance, and we realised on the sudden, with a shock which startled us, that our soul was empty.

It is deep distress at first, and we strive to recreate the past, to clothe our life again with the worn-out garments. But that must fail—all retrograde movements do. It does more than fail, it produces an absolute repulsion from the old, and we swing back into positive unbelief. We have been touching the dead, and its touch is loathsome, however dear it was. We bury it out of our sight now, and we are left naked of our faith.

Are we to settle down into that? Is that the groove in which, now that the hair is growing thin upon our temples and the shadow of the grave draws near, we wish to run down to the end? Are we truly, entirely content to commit our whole wondrous life to the embrace of nothingness? Is that the lame and impotent conclusion at which, after years of interwoven feeling and exhaustive thought, and of effort rising day by day like the sun, we have finally arrived? Is that the thing we persuade ourselves is religious in its indifference to reward, and sublime in its self-sacrifice of blessedness? I call it ignoble to cease to work for life, to give up the hope of life, when life means the vital consciousness and vital action of continuous love. I call it suicide, not sacrifice, which abjures immortality and prefers annihilation.

In the name of Christ I ask you not to be content with this chill phantom of religion, with this miscalled virtue of sacrifice, which calls upon you as its first duty

to sacrifice your personality in God. That is to turn a virtue into a vice.

The fact is you have lost belief because your past religion was borrowed too much from others, too much supported by the influence of another, too little the direct communion of your soul with its Father and its Educator. If you wish for perfection and are not content to die and love no more, the restoration of belief may be attained by the personal labour of the soul. Resolve to rely on none, to accept of no direction which will free you from the invigorating pain of effort. Meet your life and its inner questions for yourself alone with Him whose presence you dimly feel; and strive for the highest, and let the highest be this—to live for ever in God that you may live for ever to expend yourself for man. Free yourself from the cant of infidelity. It boasts of love, it boasts of liberality. Has it no sneer, has it no fanaticism? Its church is narrower than our strictest sect, its persecution, had it power, would rival that of the most virulent fanatic, unless the use it makes now of its only weapons, tongue and pen, be mere playfulness. Playfulness! Why, the foremost characteristic of our present infidelity is an appalling absence of humour. No; I do not find that denial of the faith produces the growth of charity, but the contrary, nor yet the growth of that delicate humour which goes with gentle laughter through the tangled difficulties of life, and conquers them by half disbelieving in them.

It is worth trying what one personal effort to bring ourselves into the relation of a child to a father, in all

the naturalness and simplicity of that relation, will do towards restoring faith and renewing life with tenderness. For this has been the fault of the religion we have lost. This is why we lost it, that it was not simple enough. We were not receiving the kingdom of God as little children. We had encumbered its image with opinions of men which we had to defend, and in defending them we ceased to see the simple kingdom of God. We involved it with the rites and ordinances and traditions of a sect or a church, and when partisanship had chilled charity, we ceased to see its universality. We mixed up its simple elements with peculiar feelings of ecstasy and remorse, and of spiritual experiences which separated us from our fellows, and when these transient things died away we thought that the kingdom had also died. We placed it in the uncommon, the supernatural, the wondrous; we thought it was a blessing given to few. We forgot that all great and living things are common, natural, and only not wondrous because custom has blinded our eyes. The air we breathe is everywhere—the sun pours out his light and heat in universal profusion. And the kingdom of God is as universal as the air and sunlight, is bound up with no particular church, and demands no feelings unnatural to man. It is of God, but it is for men. It rests in its heavenly place far above the fret and fume of contending opinions, but in the midst also of the heart of mankind. It reposes on a few simple truths—the Fatherhood of God; the Sonhood of Mankind; the redemption of all through educating love; the communion of all with one another in the work of charity—truths so simple when they are

grasped, so fitted for the wisest and the poorest, so ennobling in their impulse and their influence, so expansive to enfold and enlighten all the realms of human action and human feeling, that we are astonished that we have been blind so long, and at last cry, our heart broken with a great joy, 'My Father, make me a little child.'

I know not whether we are yet wearied enough in the times of early manhood to realise our childhood and His Fatherhood; but when some years have passed, and brought with them the daily burden of life, it is a simple yet a wonderful comfort to have a second self which is a child; to possess a childhood of feeling in the midst of manhood; and when the work of the day is passed, to lay our folded hands upon the knees of God as once we did upon our mother's knee, and looking up to say, 'Our Father, which art in Heaven.'

THE GLORY AND WORK OF OLD AGE.

'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.'—Luke ii. 29, 30.

The greatness of man is chiefly in this, that he can say to pain, I will endure; and to death, I will conquer its fear; and to old age, I will not be querulous—that he can say and do these things.

The glory of man is chiefly in this, that Christ enables him to go beyond the Stoic, and to say to pain, I will not only endure but I will make suffering a step towards progress; and to death, I will not only conquer its fear but open it as the portal of ampler life; and to old age, I will not only not be querulous but will, therein and thereby, finish my inner development before I go—that he can say and do these things.

To crystallise into finished perfection was the aim and the ideal of the Stoic. To grow for ever is the aim and the ideal of the Christian. Death ended the effort and the pain of the Stoic. Death continues the effort, without the pain, of the Christian. Perfection is then our object, and life our delight. We know that both are interwoven, that as the power of living increases, the ideal of perfection becomes higher; that as we become more perfect, we become more enraptured with life and capable of greater pleasure in it.

But before we enter on that delightful progress where the aspirations and the powers of the soul are equal, we have to pass through the parenthesis of life on earth, and win through pain, and weakness, and decay, the powers which will break into easy action in the life to come. We are here to win, not perfection, which we cannot reach, but as much maturity as is possible for us; and on our ripening stage by stage in a progressive and natural manner, depends our power of beginning at once in the world beyond, our race forward to perfect and more perfect things.

Youth, like spring, has its own work, a work chiefly of faithful and pure reception of beauty and joy and goodness, and of enthusiastic delight in these. Manhood, like summer, has its own work, the noble expression in upright labour of the things received in youth. The later manhood passes, like autumn, through two phases—the phase of harvest, and the phase of entering decay. Its work is the storing up of the results of life, and afterwards such a resistance of the sadness which comes of having finished all external toil, that the soul may enter upon the winter of old age with the sense of beauty unimpaired, though changed; with a quiet contentment in which the heart can fold its wings around itself and dwell within their soft and silver shadow; when life drops all its sails, like that worn-out ship, which, after much beating on the seas, lets fall its anchor where lofty cliffs enclose a quiet haven.

We have dwelt before on the Christian work of youth and manhood. We will speak to-day of the blessings and the work of age. There is no need to praise it

overmuch, to represent it, as some do, as a delightful time. The loss it brings with it is not delightful; the wearing out of energies and faculties is not, and cannot be, a source of pleasure; but if we have enjoyed our spring, and toiled through our summer, and half reaped and half dreamed through our autumn, and been faithful through all to manliness and to God, it is a miserable thing if we are to be conquered by decay at last, and when winter comes sit wailing over the dying embers of the fires of life.

The representation which our latest poet has given of the sorrowful and hopeless sadness of old age, of the pain of its retrospect because the joy and passion of life can never be felt again, of the sad desire of death and rest, without any security of life to be—but even so, of the desire for death because life has now no interest—is a strange contrast to this noble Jewish hymn, which, uttered by a man of many years, has thrilled throughout the ages to this time, and stirred by its sacred and fine humanity in old men's hearts a quiet energy and a tranquillising hope. There is in it not sorrow, but the conquest of sorrow; not the pain of retrospect, but the prophetic joy; not the bitterness, but the peace and hope of death; not the decay of interest in the world, but unabated hope for his country, and a vision of redemption for others than his countrymen; not the seeing of sadness, but the seeing of salvation. If the only message which modern poetry has to bring to old age be the same effeminate tone which characterised the poems of one only among the Greek lyrists, we had better, when the hairs grow grey upon our heads, turn

from the message of this melancholy pipe, and listen to the manly notes of the mellow psaltery of Simeon, 'Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.'

What, then, were the gains which blessed this old man's age? The first was prophetic power; not so much the power of foretelling, as the power of insight into God's doings. He saw the child and he knew that it was the Saviour of the world: 'mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.' And in a moment, before his inward sight, he beheld the sun of redemption rising in glory, not only over his own people, but in a light which should lighten the Gentiles also.

This is the glory of a Christian's old age—vividness of spiritual vision. Memory is fading away, the power of reasoning clearly is departing, passion is chilled, the hand has lost its cunning, and the lips their eloquence, decay has touched all physical and intellectual life, but the spirit lives, and lives more vitally, more intensely than ever. It does its own peculiar work better than in youth and manhood. It sees more clearly into the life and realities of things. It has gained security of faith and hope for itself, and in all matters pertaining to the spiritual progress of mankind it sees into God's plans and rejoices in them.

One does not speak vaguely in saying this. The biographies which record this strange victory over decay, this inner life, when all the rest of the man is at the point of death, are many. And they are found written, not only of the cultured and the strong in character, but of the poor, the ignorant, and the feeble-

minded. We do not find this in any philosophy or religion which has denied God and denied immortality, and we find this victoriousness more distinct and developed in Christianity than in Judaism. And moreover, this spiritual power grows stronger in proportion to the decay of the other powers, for earthly passion and aims cloud the heavenly horizon, the tyranny of the understanding contends against the claims of faith, and the perfect health of the body makes this life too precious to permit much contemplation of the other.

I do not speak against these things, for youthful passion, and the exercise of the understanding, and exquisite health are natural, and we ought to work out their good; but if they are *all*, what have we left when they decay? Nothing! according to a modern theory—everything! according to the Christian thought. Their passing away gives room for the expansion of the spirit. This, then, is the primary gain of old age. But it does not come into our possession unless we toil for it. If life and its work, and the world and its pursuits, lead us into forgetfulness of God and neglect of our spirit, then, when old age comes, the spirit has not got beyond the stage of infancy. It tries to expand, but it has never been fed, never educated, and it cannot do its work. But Simeon's intuitive vision came of a life of previous holiness. He had waited for the revelation of God's salvation, and waiting meant a life lived with that expectation at its root. In the midst of the work and turmoil of life he had grown more and more like to God, and likeness of

character to God gave him prophetic insight into God's plans for the race, and now, when the hour of outward decay had come, his spirit, which had put forth stem, and branch, and leaves, in natural progress, suddenly flowered.

I would that we could so prepare ourselves for age that we might remember in the inspiration of youth as in the labour of manhood, that the time is coming when our whole life will be dependent on the power of spiritual being in us, and remembering this, labour to train the spirit into the likeness of Christ. For, will you have light or darkness by and by; the power of vision in old age, or the impotency of regret; the hope which maketh not ashamed, or the effeminate despair; the sight of the salvation of the Lord flowing in freshening tide over all men, or the sight of your own miserable decay usurping all the view? These things lie in your own hands.

2. Another remarkable gain blessed the old age of Simeon, the possession of a liberal religious view. We find the old man set free from the exclusiveness and bigotry of his time and of his youth. Those were strange words upon the lips of a Jew—'a light to lighten the Gentiles!' They had been said before; some, in the esoteric circle of the higher Judaism, were probably saying them now. But it was not a common thought, nor a national thought, at the time of Christ's coming. Those who heard Simeon would be likely to call him a dangerous Liberal.

Some who hold the view that old age is bigoted in opinion, will be still more surprised. But after all, youth

is more narrow and intolerant than age. We call young men liberal because they give utterance to liberal opinions. But one may hold the truth in unrighteousness, and one may profess liberality in illiberality, and tolerance in intolerance. Those religious or political liberals who are always thanking God that they are not as other men are, who consider themselves to be emancipated, and despise others, are not free from the charge of Pharisaism. Many young men wear their liberalism as they wear their clothes, and it no more belongs to their real self than their clothes do. Talk to them, and you will find that their abuse and contempt of those whom they call unenlightened and narrow is as one-sided and intolerant as that of the hottest of their opponents. But one should not blame them too much, for intolerance and one-sidedness are natural to youth. It has not enough experience to be many-sided, and a large charity is the growth of years, the last result of many trials.

For this reason, tolerance and a wide religious view are natural to old age, and it is very pitiable when we find it without them. Experience of life and knowledge of men ought to soften down the harshness of our youthful judgments. It is astonishing as we grow older, if we have grown in wisdom of love, how much good we discover in men whom we thought all wrong, how much we find our severity mistaken. We learn that there is a root of good at the centre of wrong opinions, and we seek to draw out that good. We learn not to judge acts till we are acquainted with the motives which prompted them, and rather to

believe all things good of men than to systematically distrust them. Nothing can be worse than the way in which persons who profess themselves to be liberal condemn public men for turning back from liberal views, and publish their condemnation on the grounds of a single mistake or of a single speech, on which at least two opinions are possible. Common sense would lead one to think that a man does not reverse the acts and thoughts of a long life in a day. Charity would wait for further light upon the matter, but neither common sense nor charity can keep the eager enthusiast for liberalism from proclaiming his liberality by an attack upon the man who has made a slip for the first time. He pounces at once upon the wound and tears it open. I think that hateful.

We leave this sort of thing behind as we grow older. But even then we do not lose it unless there has been charity at the root of our early harshness. There is a severity of judgment which comes of eager love that men should be right, there is a severity which comes of eager desire that we should be proved right. It is the former only which ripens into the wise tenderness of age.

Again, there is an indifference as to what men believe and do, which is often mistaken for breadth of view. It does not ripen into true tolerance in age, but into contempt of men. For its root is not charity, but the idleness which is too slothful to form opinions, idleness whose root is selfishness.

The true liberality of old age is not this indifference. It is gained by the entrance of the soul into the large

region of the love of God, by deeper communion with the infinite variety of the character of Christ. Hence the old man, at one with simple and majestic principles, passes by the transient forms into which ideas are thrown by religious men, and looks for the spirit in which men work, and judges them by that; hence he lays aside the outside peculiarities of men's characters which would have jarred him in youth, and searches directly for the motives and ideas of the character; hence the temporary currents on the surface of public affairs, and the local outbursts of evil, do not much cloud his view of the fortunes of Man; he looks deeper, and sees the vast main current sweeping towards God, he finds beneath the evil the infinite fountain of good. The evils and sufferings of the world lose their harsh outlines, and their dread, and pain, and are placed in the inner light of thought. They are there seen along with the good and joy of the world, till at last the vision of the great whole dawns upon the soul, and the man learns to see God moving as a spirit in all history, and Christ endeavouring in all men's hearts.

Then he can bend his head to the blow of death, not in bitterness of anger that humanity has failed, not in selfish indifference to the welfare of mankind, but in a sweet contentment that all things are working together for good, that the Mankind for which and with which he has worked and suffered like a brother, may be left with perfect confidence in the hands of perfect love, that salvation has come and is coming unto all, not only to favoured, but to neglected races; for to him the spirit

of Simeon's phrase is ever true, that Christ is a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of his people Israel.

So he wins the crowning blessing of old age—deep peace. 'Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word.'

We cannot win that till just before the close. We long for rest to our unquiet heart and brain, all through the later days of youth. We must not have it then; for had we not our restlessness, how should we overcome the natural slothfulness of youth? We desire in a more passionate way, in our manhood, for rest from the burden of this world; for some relief from the torrent of anger, and doubt, and passion, and thought, which, far deeper and more impetuous than ever in youth, sweeps over the fields of the heart—whenever toil, relaxed for a moment, gives us leave, in the slumber of the will, to feel our wants and to question our destiny. But there is no peace for us then. We must work out our own thought, and that in solitude, for we have passed by the time when, as in youth, we could seek for sympathy in these things, and entrust our secrets to another. And the pain and the battle grow heavier and heavier as life gets nearer to old age, for day by day we lose the force which enabled us to distract ourselves in toil. Day by day the inward pain is increased by the outward effort to recall decaying energy. It is our duty to wage the battle to the end, and our best comfort, apart from Christ, is that not to wage it, and to give in, is worse than to go on. But, if God be true, and Christianity be not a dream, every

hour of the fight is storing up in us the capabilities of active peace when the warfare is accomplished. It is these capabilities which begin to rise within us into victory over restlessness when old age has come. We can contend no more—we have scarcely anything left to contend against; we have slain all our foes in the power of Christ; we have exhausted all our doubts; and as the clouds disperse, the star of hope rises soft and clear in the pale pure light of the heavenly dawn. We look on it, and are at rest; we lay down our armour; we lie back contented in the arms of God. We whisper, humbly, with S. Paul, 'I have fought the good fight.' We know that the dawn-star of hope will melt away when the sun rises on our new life, but it will melt in the light of absolute realisation. We have seen, at last, God's salvation, and we cry with Simeon, 'Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace.'

This, then, is what we are and what we receive from God, as age draws on. This is the result of the work of God upon us.

But is there no personal business which we ourselves are bound to do in age? This is our last subject, the special work of age. It is partly outward, partly inward.

Its outward work is the spreading of charity. Old age should radiate charity from it, till the atmosphere of the whole household and the society in which it lives be warm with its gracious influence. Men, women, and children should feel softened, and be bettered, by the presence of its kindliness.

Again, it is the usage of experience for the help of

others. Age should not surrender from weariness of life its right of giving sympathy, its power of forming in its calm, and from its long experience, wise judgments for the troubled lives of others. It ought not to claim its infirmity as a reason for harshness, or for want of tender interest. And that it may be able to do the good I mention, and to avoid the evil, it ought as much as possible to live with the young. Else its tendency is to be absorbed in its own weaknesses and wants; to lose interest in the actual movements of the world, and especially in those movements which are initiated by the young, which, though sometimes ill-considered and foolish, are yet the germs of that which will be, and have at least the one important quality of life. Next to the sad spectacle of seeing a young man mock the wisdom and despise the warnings of old age, is the spectacle of an old man who has only indifference for the enthusiasm and contempt for the ideas of the young.

The inward work of age is, however, the most important. After a time, the outward influence of which I have spoken becomes less and less; less direct at least, more indirect. The old man, the old woman, becoming weaker, and unable to share in earthly things, retire into their inner being, and live there a wonderful and vivid life. It is often said that we know not all the strange solitary life of children. I do not know if we think enough of the stranger and more solitary life which fills the heart of age. More solitary in the present, but oh, how peopled with the past! What vivid dreams, what memories of enthusiasm, of scenes where young love

moved in luminous air, of early sorrows, of dramas in which life concentrated itself for a few months into tragedy or comedy; what recollections of friendships which sailed with us over the ocean of life, and there sank or parted, but left with us new feelings, new thoughts, sweet tendernesses, dearer now than ever to the silent heart. What holier memories too are ours, when, in the calm of age, we look back to the place where God first touched our heart, and we set up our Bethel in its plain; where the blessedness of forgiveness in Christ, and the love of Christ, first made us new; when, as we went on, temptation met us and He enabled us to conquer, or, if we failed, to begin again; when we grew divinely conscious of an inner Spirit with us, and that assurance of eternal life began which years have only deepened. Oh! none are less alone, none have a more sweet and vivid life, than many a silent man and woman in the years of age.

And here we touch on one portion of the inner work which old age has to do—the edifying of the heart in noble religion by consideration of the past. Fate cannot rob the old of remembrance: the memory of love and joy, of friendship and companionship, is always sweet; and if the memory be one of sorrow, one may still not be unhappy if the sorrow has become an intimate part of life, cherished for its results and for the tenderness with which it was linked—since now the pain of it has gone with the decay of passion. One by one the events of life are traced in quiet retrospection, one by one they fall into a kind of religious order; their causes are seen, their meaning, and their relation to one another

and to the whole of life; till at last the conviction that a Father has been leading him all his life long is fixed in the old man's mind. He sees that everything in the past has been ripening him, that he has been made slowly more complete. Then breaks upon him as never before the assurance of immortality. 'Can this long work of God's be for nought? can this education, every hour of which was weighty with meaning, end in the grave? Is my spirit, at the very moment when it is most conscious of completion, nearest to extinction? It is impossible.'

Thus does life in the past confirm faith in the Fatherhood of God, and make an immortal future real. Thus, in spiritual brooding over past and future, the experience of the one and the faith in the other unite in one divine and glorious hope.

Once more. The inward work of old age consists in rounding the soul into as great perfection as possible, in filling up the broken edges of the sphere of life, in consolidating the world of our ideas. When we reach old age, we are conscious, if we are desirous of perfection, of a certain absence of finish in our qualities and in our Christian graces. It is vain to say that this consciousness implies a diseased self-introspection. For introspection which would be morbid in youth and manhood is natural to old age. Unless inordinately indulged in, no evils follow from it then. The old man must live much alone. He cannot do better than prayerfully seek to fulfil what is yet wanting in his faith, in his charity, in his holiness—drawing nearer and nearer to conformity with his

Saviour and his friend; making himself, through his daily companionship with the Spirit of God, more ready for the everlasting life with God.

Nor can he do better than consolidate and harmonise into a whole the ideas he has gained in life. Many are useless—these he will reject; many are noble, and have on them the impress of eternity—these he will return to and dwell on till they become interwoven with his being, possessions for ever. For ideas belong to the spiritual nature. All else will be left behind us when we die; but these endure, these we shall take with us. Let us watch and work, that our eternal companions be worthy of us and of the life to come. No aim in old age can be nobler than to arrive at death with a spirit enriched and matured by the possession of purified ideas. No aim in youth and manhood can be better than the winning of them.

From this sort of work arises a clear spiritual activity entirely independent of outward decay. It belongs to the inner life; it does not weary like intellectual activity; it is more like the easy breathing of a clear atmosphere than any strenuous labour. In it the mind is cheerful and hopeful. It blends easily with every emotion, and heightens emotion without the pain of excitement. In itself it has an arranging power, so that life harmonised under its influence is seen as a well-ordered landscape on which the sun of God's love is shining. In wonder, and in joy that he has been so cared for, and so led into maturity, all thought of self passes from the old man's life, and he throws his whole being in gratitude at the feet of his Saviour and his God. It is, in fact, the

first touch, even before death, of the pure and perfect life, the first faint throb of the exquisite existence into which he is going to enter, the half-realisation on the borders of the world of light, while yet within the glimmering shadow, of what communion with God may mean. Then indeed he feels what Simeon felt when the long-repressed cry rose to his lips, for he sees the very Christ: 'Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.'

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